

~~Kenneth Blackenzie~~

~~231 Auchincruive Road~~

~~Bishopbriggs~~

~~Glasgow.~~

Kenneth Blackenzie.

47, Warren Drive,

Eastcote,

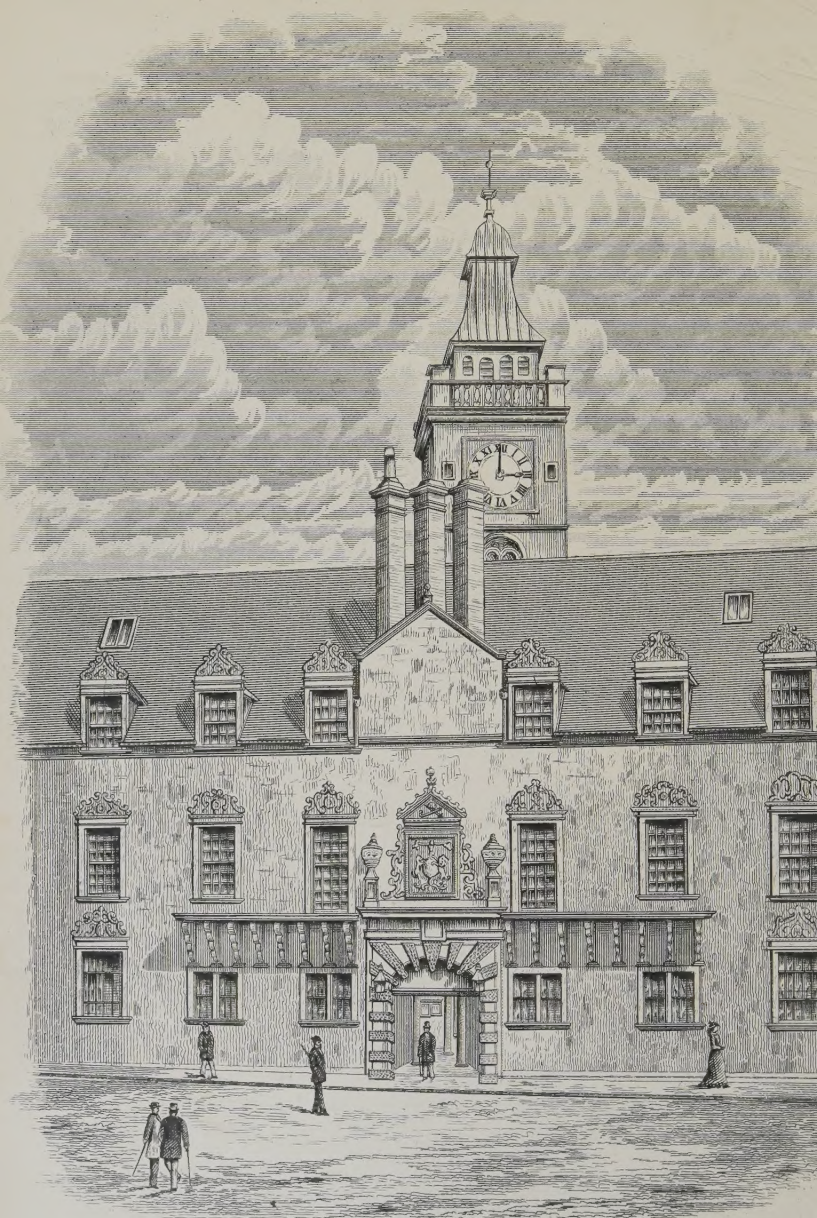
Reisip.

Widdx

£1.50

Toro Toro
Book Aid
London
England 200

Kenneth Mackenzie
221 Quinman Road
Buckingham
England



OLD COLLEGE. GLASGOW.

TO THE
MEMORY OF THE OLD COLLEGE OF GLASGOW,

THIS VOLUME IS

Affectionately Dedicated.

96
THE BOOKS WERE OPENED

AND

Other Sermons.

BY THE

REV. WILLIAM NAIRN, M.A.,

GLASGOW.



EDINBURGH:
WILLIAM OLIPHANT & CO.
1879.

CONTENTS.

I.

THE BOOKS WERE OPENED.

	PAGE
Revelation, xx. 12,	1

II.

THE WORK AND THE TIME.

"I must work the works of him that sent me, while it is day: the night cometh when no man can work." John ix. 4,	16
--	----

III.

SOWING IN TEARS.

"O my Father, if this cup may not pass away from me, except I drink it, thy will be done." Matthew xxvi. 42,	28
--	----

IV.

THE LAST DAYS OF MOSES.

	PAGE
"So we abode in the valley over against Beth-peor.	
Deuteronomy iii. 29,	44

V.

ALMOST SAVED, YET LOST.

"But his wife looked back from behind him, and she became a pillar of salt." Genesis xix. 26, . . .	63
--	----

VI.

GOD AND MAMMON.

"And Balaam answered and said unto the servants of Balak, If Balak would give me his house full of silver and gold, I cannot go beyond the word of the Lord my God, to do less or more." Numbers xxii. 18,	80
---	----

VII.

A SPRING DAY WITH JESUS.

"Can God furnish a table in the wilderness?" Psalm lxxviii. 19; Matthew xiv. 13-23; Mark vi. 30-46; Luke ix. 10-17; John vi. 1-15,	103
--	-----

VIII.

A NIGHT ON THE HOLY MOUNTAIN.

- “For he received from God the Father honour and glory,
 when there came such a voice to him from the
 excellent glory, This is my beloved Son, in whom
 I am well pleased. And this voice which came from
 heaven we heard, when we were with him in the
 holy mount.” 2 Peter i. 17-18; Matthew xvii. 1-9;
 Mark ix. 2-9; Luke ix. 28-36; John i. 14, 118

IX.

THE SHADOW OF DEATH.

- “And they were in the way going up to Jerusalem;
 and Jesus was going before them: and they were
 amazed; and as they followed, they were afraid.”
 Mark x. 32, 135

X.

ON THE WAY TO EMMAUS.

- “Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and
 to enter into his glory?” Luke xxiv. 26, 151

XI.

AS LITTLE CHILDREN.

- “At the same time came the disciples unto Jesus, saying,
 Who is greatest in the kingdom of heaven? And
 Jesus called a little child unto him, and set him in
 the midst of them, and said, Verily I say unto you,
 Except ye be converted, and become as little children,
 ye shall not *enter* into the kingdom of heaven.”
 Matthew xviii. 1-3; Mark ix. 33-37; Luke ix. 46-48, 167

XII.

A CERTAIN RICH MAN.

PAGE

“There was a certain rich man, which was clothed in purple and fine linen, and fared sumptuously every day. And there was a certain beggar named Lazarus, which was laid at his gate full of sores, and desiring to be fed with the crumbs which fell from the rich man’s table ; moreover, the dogs came and licked his sores. And it came to pass that the beggar died, and was carried by the angels into Abraham’s bosom. The rich man also died, and was buried. And in *Hades* he lift up his eyes, being in torments, and seeth Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom. And he cried and said, Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus that he may dip the tip of his finger in water, and cool my tongue ; for I am tormented in this flame. But Abraham said, Son, remember that thou in thy lifetime receivedst thy good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things ; but now he is comforted, and thou art tormented. And beside all this, between us and you there is a great gulf fixed : so that they which would pass from hence to you cannot ; neither can they pass to us, that would come from thence. Then he said, I pray thee therefore, father, that thou wouldest send him to my father’s house : for I have five brethren ; that he may testify unto them, lest they also come into this place of torment. Abraham saith unto him, They have Moses and the prophets ; let them hear them. And he said, Nay, Father Abraham : but if one went unto them from the dead, they will repent. And he said unto him, If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead.” Luke xvi. 19-31, 184

I.

THE BOOKS WERE OPENED.

REV. XX. 12.

“Hear these three things and thou shalt eschew transgression: remember what is above thee, the All-seeing eye, and the All-hearing ear, and that *all thy actions are written in a book.*”

“I SAW in the night visions,” saith the prophet Daniel, “and I beheld till the thrones were cast down, and the Ancient of days did sit, whose garment was white as snow, and the hair of his head like the pure wool: his throne was like the fiery flame, and his wheels as burning fire. A fiery stream issued and came forth from before him: thousand thousands ministered unto him, and ten thousand times ten thousand stood before him: the judgment was set, and the books were opened.”

The scene spread out before the rapt vision of the Apostle, dazzles with its brightness, and inspires with the profoundest awe. Time has reached its close, the history of human probation is ended, and now comes the final

reckoning. The great white throne once more appears to view, seated on which is the Son of man, before whose face all worlds seem to vanish, and there is found no place for them. The countless thousands, too, are there, ministering seraphim and cherubim, and the dead, small and great, stand before God, and the judgment is set, and the books are opened.

What John and Daniel saw in vision, it will be yours and mine, one day, to witness in reality. "When the Son of Man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory, and before him shall be gathered all nations." We, too, shall look upon that blessed countenance, shining as the sun in his strength; we, too, shall see the host of heaven dissolved, and the heavens rolled together as a scroll; we, too, shall behold angel and archangel surrounding the throne, and the judgment set, and the books opened.

Nor shall we be mere onlookers of that awe-inspiring scene. Every individual, small and great, Daniel and John, and you and I, will then have a book to be opened. These memories of ours will then yield up their contents. Even as into a dream of the night we oftentimes find crowded the transactions of

years, so, we believe, when we appear at the judgment-throne, we shall become conscious of our whole earthly career, as if it were compressed into one brief moment. I can think of no day, therefore, more solemn than that, when, having gone our way, and having rested with our fathers in the silent tomb, we stand in our lot at the end of the days, and behold the judgment set, and the books opened.

No! we shall not be indifferent spectators of that awe-inspiring scene. For another book will be opened, even the mind of God. The Lord will know them that are his, an innumerable company of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues, who, while on earth, feared the Lord, and spake often one to another, and of whom it was then said, "The Lord hearkened and heard, and a book of remembrance was written before him for them that feared the Lord, and that thought upon his name. And they shall be mine, saith the Lord of Hosts, in that day when I make up my jewels."

We shall confine our attention, however, to the book of Memory, and, as we study and read, may He, in whom we have our mysterious being, write our names in the Lamb's book of life.

1.

The Books which shall be opened hereafter are now being written.

Is it not so? Have we not, all of us, at times forced in upon our spirits, as if with electric flash, most solemn notice to this effect? Sayings and doings not unfrequently start up into consciousness even after the lapse of years, as if to forewarn us that memory is a record of our life, which is being preserved against the day of judgment, and which will then be forthcoming as evidence that no one will be able either to gainsay or resist. "This, this, no doubt, is the dread book of judgment, in the mysterious hieroglyphics of which every idle word is recorded." There are those who have been brought to the verge of the unseen world who tell us so; nor ought we to disregard their testimony. They inform us, when, like the disobedient prophet of old, they found themselves in the midst of the seas, the waters closing around them, and the weeds wrapping their heads, that the whole of their past life lay spread out, as on a map, before their very eyes.

Ah! it seldom occurs to us, as we pursue

our several ways, that we are engaged in work so terribly serious ; that we are stereotyping for eternity our moral history, which will one day be published—for the books SHALL be opened. Since, therefore, we are writing, each his own book, as if with invisible ink which the light of the last day will bring out ; since we are committing to its leaves the actions of every day, which, though long-forgotten, a sight of the face of the Great Judge on his throne will recall—and every eye shall see him—is it not of supreme importance that we consider what it is we are writing? Is it a book which, as far as it has gone, is only a record of errors, mistakes, sins? Or is it a book whose opening chapters narrate a praying, pious childhood, followed by others, telling of sin regretted, pardon solicited, prayer maintained, watchfulness observed, progress made? What, may I ask, have ye written in those books of yours even to-day? What sort of thoughts may they be that have occupied your minds? What kind of words may they be that have issued from your lips? What the nature of your deeds? Rest assured they are all written down, nor can they ever be erased. The deed done can never be undone ; the word spoken can never be recalled ; and

there, on the mysterious tablet of the memory are they graven as with an iron pen and lead in the rock for ever.

And yet, that which we may have written in those books ought not to alarm us so much as that which we may have left *unwritten*. That the recollection of our sins must go with us into heaven itself, that the man even after God's own heart must ever carry with him the remembrance of that cruel wrong of which he once was guilty, must not this be like a shadow on the golden pavement? But what of those who carry with them into the unseen world the recollection, not merely of their sin, but the recollection also of that stupendous folly—the neglect of the God-provided remedy for sin? To recall to memory hereafter the wrongs we perpetrated—the unkindnesses we did—this, even in the abodes of the blessed, may sometimes cast no inconsiderable shade over the thoughtful, loving soul; but must not hell grow darker at the look of him who, while on earth, neglected the great salvation? The evil that we may have actually committed blots and blurs the record of memory not so seriously as this. Whatever, then, our sins may have been, we should see to it that we have availed ourselves of the mercy and peace that are to

be had in Christ Jesus. Whatever of evil we may have done and written, we should see that the one thing needful be not left undone, unrecorded. The condemnation from the judgment throne is all for the “undones.” It is ever and always—“Inasmuch as ye did it *not*.”

2.

The Books, which shall be opened hereafter, must first be closed.

What, may I ask, becomes of the book of memory, when the silver cord is loosed? Is it “clean gone,” destroyed?

As the poet Virgil lay dying, he would have had his “Æneid” taken and consumed; but the Emperor interposed and forbade it. Like the Roman bard, how many are there who, in looking over their life-record, would fain consign it to the flames; but memory will not burn. A greater than Augustus forbids it, and a greater than Cæsar, drawing aside for a moment the curtain that hides the unseen world from our gaze, gives us to see that memory is one of the human faculties which death destroys not:—“Son, *remember*.”

But while not destroyed by death, the book

is verily closed. What this may mean, who can tell? who can conceive? Is it some pleasing oblivion that takes the book, and folds it up, and wraps it round? And if so, how long may it remain thus closed and clasped? Or is it shut, rolled up in sweet unconsciousness, only for the brief interval consumed in crossing the dark river, and forthwith opened? How is that book closed that can scarcely be said ever to have been opened—the undeveloped memory of the little child? Such questions as these only serve to show how utterly ignorant we are of the whole matter. Conditioned as we now are, it is impossible to conceive, much less describe, how the departed spirit lives in the world beyond the grave.

And yet there is a sense, intelligible enough, in which the book is closed. It is closed to you and to me, who may be left behind. As we gaze upon the lifeless form, all thought and feeling fled, does memory not appear to us as a book that has been shut? We go to the place appointed for all living, and we wander up and down among the tombs, but only to find that there is no remembrance in the grave. We feel out into the thick darkness, but no soft touch is there to tell us we are not forgotten. At such a time as this, how near the

spirit-world seems to us—the thinnest veil between us and it—yet impenetrable withal. We listen; but no sound greets our ear, no light foot-fall on the other side, no, nor the gentlest whisper. Verily, in this sense, the books *are closed*, and keep their secrets well. No more, as respects this probation-scene, can be added to them; and nothing henceforth withdrawn. Over the outer covering may be seen the solemn superscription, like that over Christ's cross, unalterable: "*what I have written, I have written.*"

And this is the state towards which we all rapidly hasten! Yet a little while, and, in like fashion, our books too will be closed. Let us seek the aid and the influence of the Holy Spirit to enable us to finish at least with the record of a good conscience, void of offence both toward God and toward man. And, as of old, Moses took the blood of calves and of goats, with scarlet-wool and hyssop, and sprinkled the book of the law, so may the precious blood of Jesus, as of a lamb without spot or blemish, be found sprinkled over these memories of ours, as well as over our hearts, on the great day when the closed books are opened.

And since it draws on apace, the time for closing the books, what we do let us do quickly.

During one of our written examinations at the University of Glasgow, we remember being hard pressed for time. The last question on the paper remained to be answered, when the old clock in the steeple gave notice that it was about to strike. The heart beat quickly, and the blood rushed to the cheek—there was no time to lose; at length the bell struck “one.” More speedily flew the pen, and more quickly beat the heart: again the clock struck—“two;” and as the sound re-echoed through the old quadrangles and penetrated every classroom, the paper was just finished as it boomed forth “three.”

Since then I have often thought that I should not like to be so hard pushed for the salvation of my soul! And, is there no danger? Are we not all more or less liable to leave to the mercy of a moment the vast concerns of an eternal scene? Here we are in this world, as in a class-room, writing out a record of our ways, and we think it not—a record of our ways upon the tablets of the memory. Life’s clock is ever giving us warning, and telling us that the hour of our departure is at hand, that the papers must be folded up and handed in, that the books must be closed. Do not the uncertainty, and the brevity, and the

manifold ills of life, all urge us to make haste? As if an angel spake, oh! hear the solemn sound. Hurry on thy writing; for as death leaves us, judgment will find us.

3.

The Books, which shall be opened hereafter, will then be read.

“If you would not have any person know that you are in the habit of doing some particular thing,” says an able writer, “don’t do it.” Nor could there be, either for old or young, more solid or salutary advice. Here and now there is a reading going on. “Do ye not know that the saints shall judge the world?” and are even now judging it. Our words and actions, however secret, yea, our very thoughts, emotions, and passions—what are these, but so many busy artists working in the hidden chambers of the heart or head; but sooner or later the day comes when the picture must be exhibited. A man’s character is oftentimes stamped upon his countenance, portrayed in the lines of the human face; whilst not unfrequently there is that about the general deportment, the look of the eye, or the shake of the hand, that reads like a

printed book. It is the tendency of all hidden things to come to the light, like seed buried in the soil.

Whilst this is the tendency, however, there are, as in nature, many counteracting influences, so that for a time much may lie shrouded in darkness. These life-records of ours may have tales to tell, which only eternity can reveal; but *there* they *will* be revealed: *there* "the Lord will both bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and will make manifest the counsels of the heart;" *there* the books will be opened, and when opened, read.

Buried deep amongst the debris of cities that were, and covered over with the accumulations of ages, what strange records lie hid! But those closed books are now being opened and read. Upon the shelves of many a museum what fragments of old-world history may be seen! Herculaneum and Pompeii, Babylon and Nineveh, have all in a measure come back to the light of day. Those scratchings, thousands, if not millions of years ago, on the everlasting rocks, revealing the glacier's action, what a revelation here! Yet how faint a picture this of the revelations of that day, when memory's long scroll shall be unwound; when the thoughts of all hearts shall be revealed;

when the books shall be opened, and when opened, read.

Some years ago, an editor was seated at his desk, preparing a leader for the following day. He was recounting the virtues of the eminent man who had then but recently died, when death appeared to himself, arrested the current of his thoughts, stayed the flow of his pen, and forced him to leave upon the paper the unfinished sentence. In a few days the article appeared, printed and published for the whole world to read, and *with its solemn and abrupt conclusion.*

So, we fear, will it be on that dread day when the books are opened. How many fearfully abrupt endings! As we read them in the light of that last day, what may we not find? "I shall indulge my evil propensity only this once," "I shall turn over a new leaf to-morrow," "I shall decide for Christ ere long," "I shall"—"I shall"—and here death had closed the book. What say you, *reader*, to an ending like this? How would *you* feel, when the books are opened and read, to find that *yours* had closed with an "I shall" and a long ominous dash, showing that the grand chief end of your life here had been indeed contemplated, but never achieved? Delay no

longer, ye who have not yet availed yourselves of God's remedy for sin. Defer this one thing needful no longer. What, in the light of such readings as those of the last day, are all earthly pursuits and splendours? ETERNITY! the very sound of the word is appalling! Eternity, and the vast concerns of the soul for eternity, ought to eclipse all other considerations.

It was a beautiful spring morning, the hard work of the session was ended, and all its examinations were over, when a student hurried away to that old Glasgow College, to see whether or not he had laboured in vain. The names of those who had been successful were wont to be written out and placed in a position so that all might see them; whilst the names of those who had failed were simply omitted. Great was our student's joy to find his name there; but this joy was soon turned into sympathetic sorrow, as a brother-student came up, and with his finger began to traverse the list. Could he have made a mistake? Again the finger went down, and again; but no name of his was there. He turned ashy pale; spake not one word; but slunk away out of the crowd.

Oh! if a young man can take to heart so sore the losing of a university degree, for which

he may again enter, and which, perchance, he may secure; what must *his* agony be, who turns to the book of life and finds his name omitted there, and the last grand chance gone?

Reader, are there to be found on the scroll of your memory, sayings, and doings, and thoughts, which for a world you would not have any person read; which you cannot read yourself without misgiving, regret, shame? Let such feelings take the shape of penitence, contrition, and confession, with resolution in God's name to write down better things for the coming time. Better surely in this way, here, in the land of hope, and now in an acceptable time, to read your memory, when "through the blood of the everlasting covenant" what is wrong may be put right, and what is omitted may be supplied, than to be forced to read it hereafter with feelings of agony, remorse, despair.

"The deeds we do, the words we say,
Into still air they seem to fleet,
We count them ever past;
But they shall last
In the dread judgment-day,
And we shall meet."

II.

THE WORK AND THE TIME.

“I must work the works of him that sent me, while it is day: the night cometh, when no man can work.”—JOHN ix. 4.

1.

THE WORK.

WHEN these words of the text were spoken by the Lord, not even his own disciples could have understood how much they embraced. But afterwards they came to understand. They came to see how the work of the Saviour looked back to bygone ages, when, before the foundation of the world, we were chosen of God in Christ, “that we should be holy and without blame before him in love.” They came to see how it embraced the institution of the sacrifices, and the production of the prophecies of former dispensations. They came to see how it contemplated the grander dispensation under which we now live; how it reached forward even to that “one far-off divine event to which the

whole creation moves," when Christ shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father, having put down all rule, and all authority and power. For the Lord Jesus must work the works of him that sent him, till he hath put all enemies under his feet. And, when the last enemy, the grim king of terrors—Death—is destroyed, "then shall the Son also himself be subject unto him that put all things under him, that God may be all in all."

How far-reaching, both backward and forward, and upward and downward, and on the right hand and left, are these words of the Saviour! They carry us back to the day "when the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy;" for without the eternal Word was not anything made that was made. They launch us onward to that hour that is coming, "when all who are in their graves shall hear his voice, and shall come forth, they that have done good unto the resurrection of life, and they that have done evil unto the resurrection of judgment." They convey us to the great under-world, whither he went on the day of his death to preach to the spirits in prison. They bear us aloft, beyond the shining cloud, into that heaven where on his mediatorial throne he sits; "angels, and authori-

ties, and powers being made subject unto him." If we take the wings of the morning, and rise with the rising sun, and go to rest with him behind the remotest waves of the western sea, we shall find no place under heaven where the Son of God is not Head over all things for his people's sake.

But it is to the works he performed during his earthly sojourn that the Saviour here particularly alludes. Nor need we wonder at this, nor be surprised that he should so emphasise that brief season of toil. For then was laid the foundation on which all his former working was to rest. Where would have been the virtue of the Paschal lamb, had the Lamb of God himself not come to take away the sin of the world? Then also was laid the foundation of the Christian church. He founded the Apostolate; and in due time sprang up men—prophets, evangelists, pastors, and teachers—who "counted not their lives dear unto them, that they might finish their course with joy, and the ministry which they had received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the gospel of the grace of God." Built thus upon the foundation of the Apostles and Prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone, we need not wonder that the Lord should have laid such stress upon his work of

eighteen hundred years ago, and called it Work of God.

What a striking specimen of that work was he then about to give! How suggestive of the goodness, and also of the greatness, of his work! As he rolled back the darkness from the eye-balls of one who had been born blind, may we not perceive the fulfilment of the prophetic words, "He will come and save you;" and as he chased away the blacker darkness from the poor man's soul, have we not an impressive illustration of his own words — "I am the light of the world!"

Consider, then, the *work* of the Great Worker. It is work that covers the whole field of time. For no less a purpose than this did God send him "to preach the gospel to the poor; to heal the broken-hearted; to preach deliverance to the captive, and recovering of sight to the blind; to set at liberty them that are bruised, and to preach the acceptable year of the Lord."

And this work the Saviour felt he *must* do. It was impossible for such a Son, of such a Father, to be idle. He thought of the home he had left, and a whole world of industry and devotion passed before his eyes. Angels sped on the wings of love to minister to the heirs

of salvation. Heavenly ones ceased not day and night, saying, "Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, which was, and is, and is to come." He thought of the home he had come to, and on all hands rose the cry for help. Shut out from society stood the poor leper, and cried in the distance for pity. The widow, with weary look, followed her only son to the tomb. In thousands, all over the world, were dying men, with no sweet hope like that which hovers on angel-wing over the deathbed of the Christian. And worse than all, and the cause of all, there was sin; notwithstanding the solemn lesson of the flood, still was the earth "corrupt before God, and the earth was filled with violence: for all flesh had corrupted its way upon the earth." No wonder, then, that the good and loving Saviour should say, from the lowest depths of heart and soul, "*I must work.*"

And shall we, who profess to follow in his footsteps, not work also? What! is activity one of heaven's first laws? Is everything above, beneath, and around me, at work, and shall I stand here all the day idle? *I*, an immortal being, born for eternity; *here*, where God-given talents are doubled or forfeited for ever; *now* with the noon-day sun above, and borne on the

wings of the ever-hurrying time? Here, and now, shall such a being as I *stand* idle when the Master bids me *go* work in his vineyard? No, my brother, my sister: "Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might." Consider Him who toiled many a day and many a night to ease thee of thy burdens; whose laborious life was crowned with thorns, and culminated on the cross to save thee from the ruinous abyss, and raise thee to sit with himself in the heavenly places. Consider him who came to earth to smoothe thy way and sweeten all thy cares, and for the gratitude you bear him, copy his own beautiful example and say—I, too, must work.

2.

THE TIME.

"*While it is day,*" saith the Saviour. There is a sense in which it was always day with Jesus. As the brightness of the Father's glory, and the express image of his person, the darkness and the light were both alike to him. The night shone as the day. But as it behoved him in all things to be made like unto his brethren, he must do God's appointed work

in God's appointed time. Having come down into our sphere of action, he could therefore speak as we all do, of life as the season for work: "I must work the works of him that sent me while it is day."

It was a very short day his in which to accomplish so much: in which to lay those broad and deep foundations on which the ages past, and present, and to come, were to rest. Who could have dreamt that a work so vast, so far-reaching in all directions, could ever have been done in so brief a day? Yet so it was. And when that day was done, and there was darkness over all the land from the sixth to the ninth hour, he could say of his life-work:—"It is finished." Oh! that we could spend our working-day as well. Oh! that we may be able to say with him when the day is far spent, and the night is at hand:—"I have glorified thee on the earth; I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do. And now, O Father, come I to thee."

But, alas! how often is it otherwise. As the shadows of the last evening fall, how many thousands of our fellow-men there are still far behind, and far from their Father's home! The precious years which God had given them "to fly from hell and rise to heaven" squandered!

How dreadful to think of the talents wasted,
of the time mis-spent!

“Be wise *to-day*. 'Tis madness to defer.
Next day, the fatal precedent will plead ;
Thus on, till wisdom is pushed out of life.
Procrastination is the thief of time.
Year after year it steals, till all are fled,
And to the mercy of a moment leaves
The vast concerns of an eternal scene.”

Surely the blessed Redeemer would teach us so to improve the passing hour that we may be able to sing, as our last sun goes down, “Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death I will fear no evil;” and when all is over, that the voice from heaven may fall upon our silent tomb: “Blessed are the dead that die in the Lord from henceforth; yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours, and their works do follow them.”

But whether we hear, or whether we forbear, “*the night cometh.*” When the Saviour uttered these words, the day, with him, was far spent, and the night was at hand. Yet a little while, and his “little children” would see him no more. So may we all say, only with this difference—we know not the day of our death. To brevity we must add uncertainty. Our days are as a weaver’s shuttle: quickly they fly;

soon, and it may be suddenly, they cease. Oh! work while it is day, the night cometh.

The night cometh! Youths and maidens, think not that these words may have no reference to you. "Here," says one, "lies the grief of a fond mother, and the blasted expectation of an indulgent father. The youth grew up like a well-watered plant: he shot deep, rose high, and bade fair for manhood. But just as the cedar began to tower, and promised ere long to be the pride of the wood, behold, the axe is laid unto the root, the fatal blow is struck, and all its branching honours tumbled to the dust." Young man, young woman, ye too may die. Work while it is day, the night cometh.

The night cometh! Little children, think not that these words may have no reference to you. "Yonder white stone, emblem of the innocence it covers, informs the beholder of one who breathed out its tender soul almost in the instant of receiving it. There the peaceful *infant*, without so much as knowing what work meant, lies still, and is at rest. Staying only to wash away its native impurity in the laver of regeneration, it bade a speedy adieu to time and terrestrial things." Little child, you too may die. Work while it is day, the night cometh.

Ye on whose heads are the snows of many winters, ye will not say that these words have no reference to you. With you it is towards evening, and the day is far spent. Yet a little while and the silver cord will be loosed, and the golden bowl will be broken, and the pitcher will be broken at the fountain, and the wheel will be broken at the cistern. Then shall your dust return to the earth *as it was*, and your spirit to God who gave it—but *not as it was*. Work while it is day, the night cometh.

“In the graves of our fathers how soon we must lie :
To-day, oh ! to-day, to a Saviour fly.”

The night cometh *when no man can work*. And is not this the weightiest and most solemn reason of all why we should work? The night that is coming is a night in which no man can work. Not that there is no activity beyond the grave, but that the work which should be done here cannot be done yonder. If for want of a word of timely warning some poor weak brother-man should be cut off in the midtime of his days, how is such neglect ever to be remedied? Have you not lost your golden opportunity, and lost it for ever? Will any bitter tears or burning regrets ever bring him

back to the light of day? If you yourself should go down to the grave, leaving the good undone that you might have done, undone, as far as you are concerned, it must remain. Others may step into the place that is to know you no more, and take up the work that you neglected; but as for you, you have lost a grand chance, which will never, *never* return. Work while it is day, the night cometh when no man can work.

No, *not even Jesus*. He must open this blind man's eyes, *now or never*. He must save men's sinful souls, *now or never*. Oh, what a thought is this! What vast importance the Saviour attaches to this present life! What a solemn meaning does he give to life's close! Reader, value more than ever thy precious time. Send forward on its swift wings to the judgment kind words and noble actions; neglect not the great salvation. How shall we escape if we neglect *that*? "Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might, for there is no work, nor knowledge, nor device, nor wisdom in the grave, whither thou goest."

"Oh that they were wise!" said Moses, the man of God. It was his last wish for his dear people. It is mine, reader, for thee; be it thine for me. Oh, that we were wise, that

we understood this, that we would consider our latter end!

“Work for the night is coming ;
Work through the morning hours ;
Work while the dew is sparkling,
Work 'mid the springing flowers.
Work when the day grows brighter,
Work in the glowing sun ;
Work for the night is coming,
When man's work is done.”

III.

SOWING IN TEARS.

“O my Father, if this cup may not pass away from me, except I drink it, thy will be done.”—MATTHEW xxvi. 42.

1.

THE TEARS.

IT was past midnight as the Lord and the Eleven left the supper-chamber, and threaded their way through the streets of Jerusalem. The full-orbed passover moon, moving in silence amid the stars, was shedding down on city, hill, and dale her mellowed radiance. Not a word they spake, the stillness of the moon-lit night being broken only by the tramp of the passing feet of the devoted band.

Nor would the disciples feel disposed to speak. It had been for them a night never to be forgotten. They had supped with their Master for the last time on earth. They had listened to words, the like of which they had

never heard before, no, not even from Jesus. And all had been closed with that high-priestly prayer, the far-reaching words of which still sounded in their ears, and awakened strange echoes in their hearts.

At length, on reaching the outskirts of the city, on the way to Olivet over the brook Kedron, the Saviour broke the silence:—"All ye shall be offended because of me this night: for it is written, I will smite the shepherd, and the sheep of the flock shall be scattered abroad."

Then spake the son of Jonas:—"Though all men shall be offended because of thee, yet will I never be offended"; to which the Lord, in ominous words and warning, replied: "Verily I say unto thee, that this night, before the cock crow, thou shalt deny me thrice." But the impetuous apostle was not to be warned:—"Though I should have to die with thee," said he, "yet will I not deny thee." Likewise also said all the disciples. And the Lord said nothing more. He gave them the last word, for—considerate Saviour!—he would not provoke them to incur greater guilt. And so the sad procession, relapsing into silence, moved on.

In the stillness of that early morning, ere yet the cock had crowed, was ever procession

like that? It needs no stretch of imagination to see that all eyes in the clear heavens above were looking down. It was the mysterious march to Calvary of the Man of sorrows. It was the Lamb of God, that taketh away the sin of the world, hasting to the altar of sacrifice. But the way to Golgotha lies through the garden of Gethsemane. All things are ready, *save one*, but that the greatest of all. The passion on the cross has been prepared for by the betrayal of the Master. The faithful Eleven, as far as possible, have been prepared for it by the Master at the supper-table. And now the MASTER HIMSELF MUST BE PREPARED.

Having arrived at that quiet, shady spot on the slope of Olivet, whither our Lord, during those last days, oftentimes resorted for meditation and prayer, he leaves the greater part of his disciples in the outskirts of the garden. With Peter, James, and John, those three chosen attendants who had been witnesses of his glory on the Holy Mount, the Saviour advances further into the solitary and gloomy ravine of the Kedron. Then began he to be sorrowful and very heavy. Strange expression! *began* to be sorrowful; the man who all his life had been "the Man of sorrows."

Verily this was not the "beginning of sorrows." Billow upon billow had already broken over him. Ofttimes, in days gone by, had his soul been cast down within him. He had groaned in spirit. He had shed the bitter tear. But now a whole sea of troubles was rolling in upon him with tremendous roar, so that he was thrown into an agony. Amazement sat upon that care-worn countenance, and dire dismay, till the blood rushed to the brow, and stood in purple beads, and dropped like sweat to the ground.

Unable at last to suppress his feelings, he spoke to the three disciples, and his words were words of anguish:—"My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death." Nor was this some mere hyperbolical expression to indicate simply *great* grief. It was literally true. The Saviour felt as if his heart were going to break. The sorrow of that hour was sorrow "even unto death." Death's cold hand was upon him. So depressed, so distressed was he, that for the moment the stars overhead went out of the sky, and the full moon withdrew behind a sable cloud. Then, in the darkness of that dark hour he adds—what indicates, if possible, even greater anguish of soul—Do not leave me, my children. It is far on into the night

I know, and ye must be wearied and ready for sleep; but do not sleep. "Stay ye here and watch with me."

Those who have waited and watched by a deathbed, have sometimes observed that the dying do not care to be left alone. They are anxious that the one at least who is dearest and nearest should be constantly present. In this respect Jesus resembled us all. In that sore agony of his that was breaking his heart, and which at last found vent in "strong crying and tears," he said unto his disciples, "Leave me not: tarry ye here and watch with me."

There is such a sacredness about human sorrow that no one should thoughtlessly intrude upon it. Let the voice be hushed and the footstep soft in the chamber of grief. Such reverence we instinctively pay to the wounded feelings of our fellow-men. With what reverence then should we contemplate the sufferings of Immanuel, the agony of God, the divine sorrow! Surely it behoves us to pause at the precincts of this garden of Gethsemane, and to hear a voice saying unto us, "Put off thy shoes from off thy feet, for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground."

2.

THE CUP.

Why this overpowering anguish? A difficult question, and one that has been variously answered. But who can fathom the unfathomable? Who can comprehend the incomprehensible? Who shall assign a reason for the profound sorrow of such a being as 'God with us,' which shall be exhaustive and complete? And yet we are not altogether in the dark. It was not because our Lord was bearing as yet 'the wrath and curse of God due to us for sin.' *That* cup he was not yet drinking. Nor was it the fear of death, which he knew to be at hand. Death, for Jesus, was going home. For him there hung over the unseen world no uncertainty, no brooding doubt. "I came forth from the Father," said he, "and am come into the world; again I leave the world, and go to the Father." Nor, as some say, was it owing to fear lest he should die ere yet he had accomplished our redemption on the cross.

May we not look for the real cause of that agony to one of those dreadful temptations to which our Lord was subjected all along, from the commencement of his public ministry down to its close on Calvary? At the beginning he

had been sorely tried by the Tempter in the wilderness. There and then, Jesus would not have the devil's way of conquering the world. Then did the Evil One cause to pass before his eyes in magical array the glories of the Messianic kingdom, saying, "All these things will I give thee, if thou wilt fall down and worship me." But the Lord would not have those high honours, except only in God's way, and so, all consciously and free, he rejected the Satanic offer: "Get thee hence, Satan; for it is written, thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve."

That sore trial was our Lord's final preparation for his *active* ministry. It was the complement of his baptism. In his baptism he was called to the work, and received strength for it. But he required also to be made aware of the errors to be shunned, and the perils to be feared. To serve this purpose the temptation in the wilderness was overruled by God. At the close of that temptation Satan departed from Jesus till a favourable season. That favourable season has now arrived, and the Tempter is back again. He has already taken possession of the heart of Judas; he is about to sift the other disciples as wheat, and the Master himself is not to escape. No wonder

the Lord should now say, "This is the hour and the power of darkness." Thus at the end, as at the beginning, the Saviour is to be sorely tried. And not without reason. Even as it was meet that he should be fully equipped for his active work, so was it meet that he should be prepared for enduring the cross and despising the shame. For we must be careful to distinguish the Lamb of God from all those victims which shadowed him forth. In their case death was enforced. They bled reluctantly. But Jesus must *freely accept* death as the punishment of sin. He can be no *real* substitute who is not a *willing* substitute. 'And hence there required to be in his life a decisive moment, when, in the fulness of his consciousness and liberty, he should accept the punishment which he was to undergo.'

That decisive moment has now come. Nor should it seem strange that Satan once more should be made the unconscious instrument in the divine hands for securing the end in view. Once again the skilful painter from the realms of darkness steps upon the scene. See, he seems to say to the tempted Son of man, you would not accept my offer at the beginning; how much easier might you have acquired dominion over the world had you then taken

my way. But you would have God's way, and now *this* is what you have to drink. What awful sufferings! Behold 'the treason' that is in this cup! Look at 'the denial' that is in this cup! See the ignominious flight of all thy disciples that is in this cup! Mark the mock trial, the mock verdict, the petty insults of the small men of the council, and the scowls and malice of the higher officials that are in this cup! Observe the injustice of the Roman governor, the heartless handling of the rude soldiery, and the ribaldry of the Jewish mob that are in this cup! Look, too, at the shame of the cross that is in this cup! Truly a bitter cup! But what are all these to the dregs at the bottom? What say you to the element which God himself has mingled in this cup—the awful death-potion at the bottom of all, the proper penalty of sin!

Thus Satan paints the scene. At the commencement, he had taken the Lord to the summit of an exceeding high mountain, and showed him all the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them, in order to allure him to *his* way of obtaining thrones and dominions. He failed; and the Lord obtained an insight thereby into all the ways in which his active work could possibly be marred. From that

hour he would not be made a king after the manner of men. Now, however, the Tempter will try the reverse of his former method, and take Jesus to an exceeding deep valley, and show him the horrible pit into which he must go if he *will* have *God's* way of winning the world. Yes; he would present the cup as repulsively as possible, nor could he, even he, present it in all its repulsiveness. For it was, indeed, death under a horrible aspect which Jesus was called on to endure—death as the wages of sin. He came into the world that he might work out for us, in our room and in our behalf, what we should have worked out for ourselves—perfect righteousness; he came that he might suffer for us, in our room and in our behalf, what we were all liable to suffer for ourselves—the penal consequences of our unrighteousness. The unrighteousnesses of the world were in some grandly vicarious way upon his soul. He was bearing the sin of the world. The Lord had laid on him the iniquity of us all. He was called upon to suffer as far as it was possible for a Holy Being to suffer in the direction of that death which is the wages of sin. And as the Tempter caused *this* cup to pass before his lips, need we wonder that the spotless Lamb of God should, for the

moment, have shrunk back in horror—that he should have been thrown into an agony; and that he should have said: “My soul is exceeding sorrowful even unto death.”

3.

THE PRAYER.

This cup the Lord Jesus must drink, however, and *that* not by force, but of his own free will, if he would accomplish our redemption. How, then, does he bring himself to consent to drink it, and so triumph once more over his old adversary the devil?

In the wilderness the Lord had quoted scripture, and plying the two-edged sword of the Word, had put the enemy to flight. Now he betakes himself to prayer. Proceeding as it were a stone's cast from the three disciples, he falls upon his knees, and then, in the height of his distress, stretches himself out upon the cold ground. Oh! what a sight for high heaven to witness; for the clear full moon and the quivering stars to look down on! whilst the words that come from the prostrate Saviour's lips are such as make us feel to-day as if the world's salvation had been trembling in the balance. Father, spare me, would my soul fain cry. Is the accomplishment

of thy counsel, is the redemption of mankind, not otherwise possible than by my thus suffering? Is the cross really the indispensable means of gaining this end? Canst not thou, O Father, in thy unlimited power, find another way whereby to reconcile the world to thyself, not imputing to men their trespasses? Nevertheless, not as I will, but as thou wilt.

In all this the Saviour "sinned not, nor charged God foolishly." What though nature did rise against such sufferings! Is repugnance to suffering not natural? Christ had been no true man had he not shrunk from the cross; nor only so—without such repugnance there had been no real sacrifice, for sacrifice begins where conflict begins.

Having thus prayed, he returns to his disciples, and finds them asleep. "What," he says, as if he had been praying for an hour, or intended to pray for an hour, "What! could ye not watch with me one hour? Simon, son of Jonas, where now is thy boasting? Is it thus that ye have all already come short? Watch. Temptation is at hand, and the Tempter is in the field. Yet a little while ay, before the cock crow, and you will all find that this is the hour of darkness. Watch! For however willing the spirit may be, the flesh

is weak. Consider me myself. How willing am I to do my Father's will and my Father's work, to minister and give my life a ransom for many; yet do I feel weighed down by the weakness of the flesh, and have just been praying: "Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me."

Having thus instructed his disciples, the Lord goes away again the second time, and prays, saying: "O, my Father, if this cup may not pass away from me, except I drink it, thy will be done."

With God all things are possible. How easily could he have caused the cup to pass away from the lips of his Son, as far as mere omnipotence was concerned! How easily could he have arrested the Traitor and his band! No one knew this better than our Lord himself. "Thinkest thou," he afterwards said, "that I cannot now pray to my Father, and he shall presently give me more than twelve legions of angels? But how, then, shall the scriptures be fulfilled that thus it must be?"

Ah! that was the point. It was no matter this for mere omnipotence to deal with. It *became* the Almighty, for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the Captain of their

salvation perfect through sufferings. That Captain of our salvation, he who leads the way of faith, even he, required to learn that salvation for men cannot be accomplished by omnipotent force, but only by moral means and motives : that nothing could more directly and certainly conduce to the establishment of the kingdom of God in the world than the gracious self-humiliation of the King ; that only so could he subdue human hearts, and become Lord of men's affections as well as of their destinies. And so it behoved the Messiah to suffer, ere he could enter into his glory.

And this our Lord had to learn. And he learned it. Hence he does not pray, Make bare thine arm, Father, and come to my help ; but, "if this cup may not pass away from me except I drink it, thy will be done." And who can fail to see in this some progress made towards free acceptance of the cup ? It was the deepest desire of his heart that his Father's wish and his Father's will should be done, at whatever cost to himself.

Having so far "learned obedience" the Lord once more returns to his disciples, and once more finds them asleep ; for their eyes were heavy. No wonder. It was now far past midnight, and their minds had been long on the

strain. And they were sleeping, too, for sorrow. Having sought in vain to arouse them, the Lord goes away again, and prays the third time, saying the same words, or rather the same "word," the burden of his prayer being to the same effect as before: "Father, thy will be done."

4.

THE VICTORY.

And is there no answer? Yes. Having offered up prayers and supplications, with strong crying and tears, unto him that was able to save him from death, "he was heard in that he feared." He is heard. When in the wilderness, and about to die for hunger at the end of the forty days' fast, "angels came and ministered unto him." And now that once again he finds himself at the point of death for very horror at the sight of the cup in the Tempter's hand, "there appeared unto him an angel from heaven strengthening him." He is heard; and he is delivered from death. The fear that had taken such hold of him, so that he could not look up, passes away. The cup, indeed, is not to be withdrawn; but strength is given him to enable him to drink

it. The ingredients which it contains are as bitter as ever; but the impression which at the first that cup had produced upon his mind is no longer the same. And so he rises from his struggle like a giant refreshed, delivered from his fear, and in possession of the profound calm which perfect submission brings. He has now given himself up wholly. He has lifted up all his desires in reference to the approaching crisis until they have melted away into the desire of the Father, and Father and Son are one. He has *sanctified* himself. In this garden of tears he has done what he said he would do, and now he is PREPARED TO DIE. Yet a few more weary hours and the great redemption is complete, and Satan's power o'erthrown.

“And thou art laid
Deep in thy darksome bed;
All still and cold beneath yon dreary stone
Thy sacred form is gone;
Around those lips where power and mercy hung
The dews of death have clung;
The dull earth o'er thee, and thy foes around,
Thou sleep'st a silent corse in funeral fetters wound.”

By the side of thy holy sepulchre, thou Son of God, thou Saviour of men, in silent prayer we kneel—that holy sepulchre of thine, ‘the grave of the old world and the cradle of the new.’

IV.

THE LAST DAYS OF MOSES.

“So we abode in the valley over against Beth-peor.”—DEUT. iii. 29.

LIKE some stately cedar, Moses, the servant of the Lord, still stands erect. But the axe lies at the root of the tree. The word has gone forth; cut it down: “Let it suffice thee; speak no more to me of this matter. Get thee up into the top of Pisgah, and lift up thine eyes westward, and northward, and southward, and eastward, and behold it with thine eyes; for thou shalt not go over this Jordan.”

It cannot surely fail to be instructive to consider how Moses took this refusal on the part of God to accede to his prayer, that he might be permitted to cross the river and see the land of promise. The verse which we have taken on which to turn our thoughts sets this point touchingly before us. When the good old man saw that it was vain to

hope, he quietly submitted to the divine decree; and in language as simple as it is affecting, only replied, "So we abode in the valley over against Beth-peor."

"In the valley"—how suggestive! The journey of life all but ended! A hundred and twenty years hastening to a close! On the fleet wings of thought we fly back to the hour when, an infant of days, Moses was taken from the cradle of bulrushes and carried to the palace of the Pharaohs; we follow him through the schools, getting learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians, and growing mighty in words and in deeds; we mark the grand crisis of his life, when, full forty years old, he refused longer to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter, choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season. Since then what hidden struggles! What consuming cares! How many anxious days and sleepless nights the great lawgiver and leader of Israel must have lived through! What a retrospect his "in the valley over against Beth-peor." With true poetic fire and feeling he sings himself of that marvellous past, "Lord thou hast been our dwelling-place in all generations. Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever

thou hadst formed the earth and the world, even from everlasting to everlasting thou art God. Thou turnest man to destruction, and sayest, Return ye children of men. For a thousand years in thy sight are but as yesterday when it is past, and as a watch in the night. Thou carriest them away as with a flood; they are as a sleep: in the morning they are like grass which groweth up. In the morning it flourisheth, and groweth up; in the evening it is cut down and withereth. For we are consumed by thine anger, and by thy wrath are we troubled. Thou hast set our iniquities before thee, our secret sins in the light of thy countenance. For all our days are passed away in thy wrath; we spend our years as a tale that is told."

Whilst Moses, the man of God, is thus surveying the past, he is not forgetful to contemplate also the future. "In the valley over against Bethpeor" he makes preparation for his departure. That a man should set his house in order against the day of death is only reasonable. Moses, however, was not so foolish as to leave the *great* preparation to a dying day.

Long before he pitched his camp in the valley over against Beth-peor, he had learned

to count the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt, for he had respect unto the recompense of the reward. In times now long gone past, and in the midst of many and sore trials, he endured as seeing him who is invisible. He looked at the things which are unseen and eternal. He lived under the influence of the world to come. Young man! young woman! go and do likewise. While yet the flush of beauty and of strength lingers on the cheek, seek the kingdom of God and his righteousness; and, like Moses and like David, when the sands of life are all but run out, thou shalt be able to sing "Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; for thou, Lord, art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me."

Whilst, however, Moses did not put off to a dying day "the vast concerns of an eternal scene," he was by no means idle. Not a little even "in the valley" remained for him to do. Let us be wise and prudent as we may, we are all in danger of forgetting something. Are there not more things to be attended to than one's own soul? What of those dear ones we must leave behind? Can we, before we die, do nothing to smooth for them the rugged

path of life? Are there no obstacles we can sweep out of their way, ere yet they cross the river? See how this man of God finds some such hindrance in the way of his people, which he must remove ere he leaves the valley over against Beth-peor.

If we turn to Numbers xxxi. 1, we shall find it written, "And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying, Avenge the children of Israel of the Midianites: afterward shalt thou be gathered unto thy people."

Those Midianites had snared the children of Israel, and entangled them in the meshes of idolatry and licentiousness. It was needful for their well-being and progress that this sore temptation should be swept out of the way. And so, a few weeks before his death, we find Moses proceeding, with all the ardour and heroism of youth, to execute the instructions which he had received from the Lord. "Arm some of yourselves," he says, "unto the war, and let them go against the Midianites, and avenge the Lord of Midian. Of every tribe a thousand, throughout all the tribes of Israel, shall ye send to the war."

And are there no such hindrances yet to the peace and prosperity of those dear ones whom you, too, may be called on soon to leave

behind? Would it not disturb the happiness of many a departed saint, were he permitted to look down and see his once united family rent asunder, and all because he had neglected to make his will? Surely it behoves men who would be wise, as well as good, to have all their worldly affairs so arranged and ordered as to leave no stone of stumbling, no rock of offence. Let us do what we can while we live to clear the way for our children's own entrance, in due time, into the land promised to their fathers, as did Moses, the man of God, when he slew the Midianites.

Nor was this all. Before he died he also caused solemn assemblies of the people to be convened in order once more to hear the law of the Lord. From the beginning of chapter fourth of this book of Deuteronomy, down to the close of the thirtieth chapter—a most instructive portion of holy scripture, which I would advise you to read at your leisure—we may learn what Moses said and did before he died, in the way of rehearsal of God's law; in the way, too, of grateful commemoration of God's wonderful works in behalf of the chosen people; in the way, too, of pleading, and promise, and warning, that the people might live and prosper when he was no longer with them.

How judiciously the man of God *begins*: “Now therefore hearken, O Israel, unto the statutes, and unto the judgments, which I teach you, for to do them, that ye may live, and go in and possess the land which the Lord God of your fathers giveth you. Ye shall not add unto the word which I command you, neither shall ye diminish ought from it, that ye may keep the commandments of the Lord your God which I commanded you. . . . Keep therefore, and do them: for this is your wisdom and your understanding in the sight of the nations, which shall hear all these statutes, and say, Surely this great nation is a wise and understanding people! For what nation is there so great, who hath God so nigh unto them, as the Lord our God is in all things that we call upon him for? And what nation is there so great, that hath statutes and judgments so righteous as all this law, which I set before you this day? . . . The Lord spake unto you out of the midst of the fire: ye heard the voice of the words, but saw no similitude; only ye heard a voice. And he declared unto you his covenant, which he commanded you to perform, even ten commandments; and he wrote them upon two tables of stone.”

How solemnly the man of God *concludes*: “I call heaven and earth to record this day against you, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing: therefore choose life, that both thou and thy seed may live; that thou mayest love the Lord thy God, and that thou mayest obey his voice, and that thou mayest cleave unto him; for he is thy life, and the length of thy days.”

With what power and pathos *does he press all home*: “I am an hundred and twenty years old this day; I can no more go out and come in: also the Lord hath said unto me, Thou shalt not go over this Jordan.”

And what better preparation than this can there be for those who are “in the valley,” and who, ere long, must go the way of all the earth? Have you no family, or no friend whom you can benefit and bless with the wise counsel which the multitude of years should bring? “I have no greater joy,” wrote the aged disciple John, “than to hear that my children walk in the truth;” and shall we, who profess to walk in the footsteps of the saints, not take measures before our departure, whereby *our* children may be kept in remembrance of the things that belong to their peace, though they already know them? “Yea,” saith an apostle,

“I think it meet, so long as I am in this tabernacle, to stir you up by putting you in remembrance; knowing, that shortly I must put off this my tabernacle, as our Lord Jesus Christ hath shewed me.” Blessed preparation for the final departure! Happy the man, whether an apostle or a prophet, a peasant or a peer, whose life closes thus! whose last days on earth are so devoted to the eternal welfare of those who are to come after, that, when the solemn hour has struck, and the last echo has died away in the far distance, he, being dead, may yet speak.

Nor was it otherwise with Moses, the servant of the Lord. He not only spoke his instructions, but wrote them in a book; handed this book over into safe keeping, and gave orders that it should be read every seven years. “Moses wrote this law and delivered it unto the priests, the sons of Levi, which bare the ark of the covenant of the Lord, and unto all the elders of Israel. And Moses commanded them, saying, At the end of every seven years, in the solemnity of the year of release, in the feast of tabernacles, when all Israel is come to appear before the Lord thy God in the place which he shall choose, thou shalt read this law before all Israel, in their hearing.”

Those of you who are "in the valley" do not require, before *your* decease, to *write* the book. The book is already written. The volume of inspiration is complete, and that which now remains for you to do is to see that, after you are gone, it shall be *read*. And this not every seventh year, nor even every seventh day, but every day of every year. Let your whole life, and your life's latest days in particular, be one beautiful sermon on the preciousness of God's word, and one powerful exhortation to all who may see you poring over its sacred pages, to make it the subject of their own constant and prayerful study. What more precious legacy can you leave your children, than the love of Holy Scripture instilled into their hearts? Ay, and the love of God's house, where those holy oracles are read "in the hearing of all the people"? Better far than with silver and gold so to endow your little ones, that they shall be able conscientiously to say, when you are not at hand to hear, "I had rather be a door-keeper in the house of my God, than dwell in the tents of wickedness." "O how love I thy law, it is my meditation all the day."

Moses saw to it, before he died, that ordinances were established for his children. See

ye to it, that *your* children are trained to take advantage of the ordinances. Blessed are the father and mother who are permitted to look down from their home in heaven, and see their loved ones seated at the feast of love, genuine disciples of the Lord Jesus! Be it yours to follow in the footsteps of Moses, whose last days on earth—though not his last days only—were spent in so ordering matters, that after his decease the people might not perish for lack of knowledge.

Nor was this all. Before he died, and preparatory thereto, he introduced Joshua to the people as his successor. This he did by the command of the Lord: “The Lord said unto Moses, Behold, thy days approach that thou must die; call Joshua, and present yourselves in the tabernacle of the congregation, that I may give him a charge. And Moses and Joshua went, and presented themselves in the tabernacle of the congregation. And the Lord appeared in the tabernacle in a pillar of cloud; and the pillar of the cloud stood over the door of the tabernacle. And the Lord said unto Moses, Behold, thou shalt sleep with thy fathers. . . . And the Lord gave Joshua the son of Nun a charge, and said, Be strong, and of a good courage: for *thou*

shalt bring the children of Israel into the land which I sware unto them."

"And Moses called unto Joshua, and said unto him in the sight of all Israel, Be strong, and of a good courage: for *thou* must go with this people unto the land which the Lord hath sworn unto their fathers to give them; and *thou* shalt cause them to inherit it."

It is not every man whom Providence provides with a Joshua, to whose care and guidance he may commit his dependent charge. And yet relatives there are, who have not shrunk from undertaking the upbringing of orphan children; and strangers too have been found, who have counted it no small honour to be permitted to stand in the place of parents. But, be that as it may, and whilst taking care to make what provision can be made for those who are soon to be left without guardian or friend, we cannot be too thankful that "a father of the fatherless, and a judge of the widow, is God, in his holy habitation." In hope and in confidence may we ever entrust them to him who has said, "Leave thy fatherless children, I will preserve them alive; and let thy widows trust in me." The Lord liveth when we die, and blessed be our rock, and let the God of our salvation be exalted. Moses only did

what God told him to do, when he committed Israel to the care and keeping of Joshua; nor can we do better. If a Joshua be needed, the Lord will provide a Joshua; and if a Joshua be not needed, the Lord knows best. God is the only indispensable Being; and when all earthly supports fail us—as sooner or later fail they must—we shall know, if we follow on to know the Lord, that the eternal God is our refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms.

Still further: Moses, before he died, composed a hymn adapted to the fickle character of the people, and intended to be his last and most impressive admonition.

“The Lord said unto him, thou shalt sleep with thy fathers; and this people shall rise up and forsake me and break my covenant. Then my anger shall be kindled against them in that day. . . . Now therefore write ye this song for you, and teach it the children of Israel; put it in their mouths, that this song may be a witness for me against the children of Israel.” And Moses did so. “I know,” he says, “that after my death ye will utterly corrupt yourselves, and turn aside from the way in which I have commanded you; and evil will befall you in the latter days.”

Then follows that grand old ode recorded in the thirty-second chapter of this book ; “Give ear, O ye heavens, and I will speak ; and hear, O earth, the words of my mouth. My doctrine shall drop as the rain, my speech shall distil as the dew ; as the small rain upon the tender herb, and as the showers upon the grass.”

The swan of fable sings before it dies. But it is no fable to hear the good man sing as he approaches the confines of the eternal world. “When I formerly read Bunyan’s description of the land of Beulah, where the sun shines, and the birds sing day and night, I used to doubt whether there was such a place ; but now my experience has convinced me of it, and it infinitely transcends all my previous conceptions.” So spake one of the children of God as he drew near the end of his earthly pilgrimage. And he added, “Were I to adopt the figurative language of Bunyan, I might date this letter from the land of Beulah. The celestial city is full in my view. Its glories have been upon me, its breezes fan me, its odours are wafted to me, its sounds strike upon my ears, and its spirit is breathed into my heart. Nothing separates me from it but the river of death, which now appears but as an insignificant

rill, that may be crossed at a single step whenever God shall give permission. The Sun of righteousness has been gradually drawing nearer and nearer, appearing larger and brighter as he approached, and now he fills the whole hemisphere; pouring forth a flood of glory in which I seem to float like an insect in the beams of the sun; exulting, yet almost trembling, while I gaze on this excessive brightness, and wondering, with unutterable wonder, why God should deign thus to shine upon a sinful worm."

Need we be surprised that men of God like Payson should fall asleep with heaven's melodious words upon their lips? Need we wonder that one of the last acts of Moses should have been the composition of a sacred song? That same day on which Moses rehearsed his matchless poetry, the Lord said unto him, "Get thee up into this mountain Abarim, unto mount Nebo, which is in the land of Moab, that is over against Jericho, and die in the mount whither thou goest up, and be gathered unto thy people."

And now we may behold him taking his last farewell. After so long a time how sweetly yet falls his parting blessing upon our ears! This is the blessing wherewith he blesses the

children of Israel before his death, naming them tribe by tribe, *one by one*, a touch of nature that makes us hear the heart of a dying parent beating across four thousand years:—

“Let REUBEN live, and not die; and let not his men be few.

“Hear, Lord, the voice of JUDAH, and bring him unto his people.

“Let thy Thummim and thy Urim be with LEVI, thy holy one.

“BENJAMIN, the beloved of the Lord, shall dwell in safety; Jehovah shall cover him all the day long.

“Blessed of the Lord is the land of JOSEPH let the blessing come upon his head and upon the top of the head of him that was separated from his brethren.

“Rejoice, ZEBULUN, in thy going out; and, ISSACHAR, in thy tents.

“Blessed be he that enlargeth GAD.

“DAN is a lion's whelp: he shall leap from Bashan.

“O NAPHTALI, satisfied with favour, and full with the blessing of the Lord; possess thou the west and the south.

“Let ASHER be blessed with children; let him be acceptable to his brethren, and let him dip his foot in oil. Thy shoes shall be iron

and brass; and as thy days, so shall thy strength be."

For himself, the servant of the Lord has nothing now to ask; his last breath is spent in prayer for the good of his people. See this man. Take one long look at him ere yet he leaves the valley over against Beth-peor, and begins to ascend the hill. What a grand preparation has all this been for the last pilgrimage! He has waited his appointed time; nor has he idly waited. As long as a gleam of daylight lasted, he has worked. His latest efforts have been employed in serving that God and that people to whom he had dedicated the whole of his life. Whatsoever his hand did find to do he did with all his might, as one who understood full well that the night cometh when no man can work. Like a good and faithful steward, to the close he toiled, with loins girt, ready at any moment to respond to the summons from on high. May such preparation for the last journey be yours; may such preparation be mine; and when the last gleams of sunset fade away in the distance, and the grey evening that precedes the dawn of the everlasting day draws on apace, may we be able to say, "Children, it is time to go home."

But who will describe that home-going of

Moses, the servant of the Lord! In fancy we may follow him, burdened with the weight of one hundred and twenty years, yet with eagle eye and step elastic, wending his way up the hillside. We can fancy him turning round again and yet again, and waving a fond and fatherly adieu to the assembled thousands of Israel at the mountain's base; and then a last farewell, like the final pressure of a hand ere yet the pulse has ceased to beat. Far now from the gaze of eyes bedimmed with tears, in fancy we can follow him pressing still upwards, till at last he reaches the summit of the hill, and there, from the top of Nebo, according to the word of the Lord, surveys the promised land. How glorious the prospect! Yonder the goodly mountain, even Lebanon, clothed with waving cedars, and Hermon crowned with snow! Yonder the Jordan, which he was not to cross, winding southward to the sea! Yonder the lake of Galilee, destined to become "the most sacred sheet of water in the world," whose shores shall yet be trodden by still more sacred feet, whose winds and whose waves shall yet be hushed to rest by more than human voice. In fancy we can behold him gazing, till rapt into future times, the eye grows glassy like the lake, and the

staff that had helped him up drops from his nerveless hand, and he falls into the bosom of his God.

“And God took him.” His sainted spirit entered into rest, and angel hands laid his body in its unknown grave. The Lord, we are told, buried him “in the valley,” in the land of Moab, over against Beth-peor. Who shall paint the spot? No monument marks out his grave. The grave of a man like Moses needs no other monument than that of his noble life. And so he who was not to go over the Jordan went over the river of death, beheld a more lovely land than earthly Canaan, saw the king in his beauty, and learned that his cross was his crown.

V.

ALMOST SAVED, YET LOST.

“But his wife looked back from behind him, and she became a pillar of salt.”

—GENESIS xix. 26.

IN Scripture the term “salt” is sometimes used as a symbol of perpetuity. Hence, in the book of Numbers, we read of a covenant of salt; meaning thereby, a covenant that should be perpetual. In 2 Chronicles we find it written that, “The Lord God of Israel gave the kingdom over Israel to David for ever, even to him and to his sons, by a covenant of salt,” that is to say, by a perpetual and binding engagement. Even so, when we read that Lot’s wife became a pillar of salt, we are not obliged to understand this literally; but only as signifying that her sudden and fearful end became thenceforth a warning to the disobedient and worldly. She lingered behind, notwithstanding the order of the angels to make haste: she even turned

back, either for something on which her heart was set, or out of attachment to her children, who had decided to stay in Sodom; and so she perished. Thus she became a pillar of salt—an everlasting warning to all in all ages, who should read the story, to flee from the city of destruction, although that flight should involve the sacrifice of every earthly object.

But whether she became an actual pillar of salt, or whether this expression is not rather to be understood as just explained, it matters little. We are all agreed that she perished, and *that* through disobedience, and a fatal clinging to what was in Sodom; thus presenting a solemn warning not to refuse *him* who speaketh to *us*, and who bids us flee from the wrath to come.

The special truth which our text suggests, and which I shall endeavour to illustrate and enforce is this, "*A person may be almost saved, and yet be lost.*"

And this will appear if we consider the advantages which this woman possessed, and the line of conduct which she pursued.

1.

THE ADVANTAGES WHICH LOT'S WIFE POSSESSED.

1. *She had a righteous man for her husband.*

We have it on the authority of the New Testament that Lot was a righteous man ; that he distressed himself about the conduct and conversation of the wicked around him ; that from day to day what he heard in Sodom vexed his righteous soul ; and that, as a preacher of righteousness, he sought to turn them from their unlawful deeds.

The wife of such a man must oftentimes have marked the sadness of his countenance, and, with womanly curiosity, have inquired into the cause ; she must have known him many a time in prayer bow the knee ; and many a time she may have heard the earnest cry, "O that the wickedness of the wicked were come to an end !" Under the moral influence of this godly man she must have come, and no small progress in the love of virtue she may have made. Surely he who cared so much for the spiritual well-being of others, could not have been indifferent to that of his own wife. We can easily imagine him praying for her also, and

studiously setting before her a good and pious example, and otherwise living together with her as with one whose happiness, here and hereafter, was bound up in his own.

But, notwithstanding this salutary home influence, she tarried and turned back in the evil day, and her sudden and terrible destruction presents us with a most awful illustration of the fact that a person may be almost saved, and yet be lost.

It is related of Monica, the mother of St. Augustine, how she prayed and wept for her reckless and wayward boy; and how the bishop, calling upon her one day, endeavoured to console her by saying, "Oh! do not cry, poor woman, do not cry; the child of so many prayers and tears cannot be lost."

In that case it turned out to be true. The thoughtless youth became the eminent Divine, and now you will find his name inscribed as a Saint upon the historic page.

But this does not always hold. Absalom had the precious privilege of a godly upbringing, yet—we know his end; Judas sat under the ministry of One who spake as never man spake, yet—we know *his* end; and there may be some one in your own recollection who had all the advantages of a pious training and example, and

where is he? Oh, if we would be not almost, but altogether saved, we must make religion a *personal* matter. To have a godly man for your husband will not save you, O wife! To have a pious woman for your wife will not save you, O man! To have well-doing children for your offspring will not save you, O parents! And ye children, if ye would be saved, ye must yourselves be the children of God. The rich man in the parable was a son of Abraham, yet he lifted up his eyes in hell; and this woman of our text was the wife of a righteous man, yet, looking back from behind him, she became a pillar of salt—“*Almost saved, yet lost.*”

The truth of this statement will still further appear, if we consider—

2. That she also had *the benefit of a merciful providential dispensation.*

No mention is made of this woman till we come to the 15th verse of this chapter; but there can be little doubt that she was one of the company whom the four kings, in their battle with the five, carried off out of Sodom. For we read, “When Abram heard that his brother”—that is, properly speaking, his nephew—“was taken captive, he armed his trained servants born in his house, three hundred and eighteen, and pursued them unto

Dan. And he divided himself against them, he and his servants by night, and smote them, and pursued them unto Hobah, which is on the left hand of Damascus; and he brought back all the goods; and also brought again his brother Lot and his goods, and the *women* also, and the people." And Lot's wife was, no doubt, one of those women.

What is usually called 'a narrow escape,' is a critical moment in the life of man or woman. For then God deals closely with the soul, and then the soul is most disposed to hearken. "Oh, if God would spare me but this once, what a different man I shall be! What a different son to that poor old mother far away." So has been known to exclaim many a shipwrecked mariner as he clung to the floating spar, and thought of home and the past. So has been known to exclaim many a one almost shipwrecked by his own follies and sins. And sometimes such resolutions are not fruitless; occasionally, merciful interpositions of Providence arrest even the most thoughtless, and change for good the whole current and tenor of their lives.

But it is not always so. In how short a time do many, who have had hair-breadth escapes, forget God, and all their own solemn

protestations! Many a soldier, whom God had watched on the battle-field, and protected from the fatal bullet or deadly sabre-thrust, has at last perished in a drunken quarrel, or in the heat of some angry dispute. Many a one whom God had raised from the bed of death, in answer to solemn prayers and vows, has only been too ready to return to his old courses. Ah! let us see to it, that we turn to the best account all such providential dealings. They are certainly meant for our good. By means of them we may be ultimately and altogether saved; but if we allow them to pass unheeded, or if on the return of prosperity we forget the God to whom we cried in our adversity, who proved the God of our salvation, then, like the wife of Lot, who would seem not to have been sufficiently or savingly impressed with her marvellous escape, we may find in our own sad experience this saying true, "*Almost saved, yet lost.*"

The truth of this statement will still further appear, if we look—

3. *At the gracious visit she received from the angels.*

Angels' visits, it has been said, are few and far between; but Lot's wife was one of those highly favoured ones, to whom it was given "to entertain angels."

It was towards evening, and the day was far spent. The cities of the plain lay bathed in the golden setting sun-light. One shadow alone darkened the scene; but that was the blackest of shadows, the shadow of sin. What lovely lands are still overshadowed thus! And Lot perhaps was sitting in his tent-door musing so, and saying, as has since been said:—

“Here every prospect pleases,
And only man is vile.”

Need we wonder, that to a man with heart and soul so tuned, angels from heaven should appear? We *see* what we make ourselves *fit* to see; and were we purer in heart than we are, we would see God himself. Observing the celestial visitants, Lot rises to meet them, bows himself with his face towards the ground, and, after kindly and cordial persuasion, prevails upon them to become his guests for the night.

And now darkness reigns over the land, and wickedness blacker than the darkness. But there is light in the dwellings of the righteous, and Lot and his wife converse with their heavenly visitors.

Consider. Suppose that God were to send two angels to you, that you had shut to and

barred your door, and that around your comfortable fire with your dear ones you were listening with rapt attention and delight to their high and holy conversation. Would your hearts not burn within you? Would you not feel inclined to think—"Ah! now it is all well with us. There is no danger of us. God would not have sent his angels all the way from heaven to us unless he had intended to save us." And that is true. God would not. And yet you may perish.

But more than this. Has God not sent a greater than angels, even Jesus, to warn you to flee from the wrath to come? Behold this stranger at the door! Surely, you will now say, "It is indeed all right with me. There is no danger of me. God would not have sent his only-begotten and well-beloved Son all the way from heaven to this earth, to *hunger* and *thirst*, and *toil* and *weep*, and *die* for me, unless he had intended to save me and do me good." And this is *doubly* true. God would not. And yet you may perish. Remember Lot's wife; and remember the argument of the writer to the Hebrews: "If the word spoken by *angels* was stedfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just recompense of reward; how shall we escape, if we neglect so great

salvation, which at the first began to be spoken by the LORD, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard him, God also bearing them witness, both with signs and wonders, and divers miracles, and gifts of the Holy Ghost, according to his own will?" How often has Christ spoken to us by the mouth of his servants, and in his word, and by his Spirit! How often have we heard him say to the weary and heavy laden: "Come unto me, and I will give you rest;" to the despairing, "Him that cometh unto me I will in no wise cast out;" to the dilatory and careless, "Up, get you out of this place, for the Lord will destroy this city; escape for thy life, look not behind thee, neither stay thou in all the plain; escape to the mountains lest thou be consumed; flee from the wrath to come!" Have we not heard him so speak? And have we not been moved? And have we not resolved? Almost saved, you would say, and yet after all we may perish.

Remember Lot's wife. Great were her advantages:—A godly man for a husband, and yet she perished; a merciful, providential dispensation, and yet she perished; a gracious angelic visit, and yet she perished. But what were her advantages to ours? How different our day from hers! God who at sundry times

and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, and unto the patriarchs by the angels, hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son. See, then, that ye refuse not him that speaketh ; for if she escaped not who refused them that spake on earth, much more shall not ye escape if ye turn away from him that speaketh from heaven.

2.

THE LINE OF CONDUCT WHICH LOT'S WIFE
PURSUED.

1. *She consented to join the party in their flight from the doomed cities.*

It cannot be said that she was altogether disobedient to the heavenly visitors. With the early morning we may see her, along with her husband and two daughters, setting out for the appointed place of safety. And who now would not be justified in entertaining the highest hopes in regard to her? It is well to make a start. But a start is not enough.

“Now I saw in my dream,” says Bunyan, “that the man Christian began to run. But he had not run far from his own door, when his wife and children perceiving it, began to cry after him to return. But the man put

his fingers in his ears and ran on crying—Life, life, eternal life; so *he* looked not behind him, but fled towards the middle of the plain.”

As Christian continues his flight, Obstinate and Pliable follow to bring him back; but after conversing for a little with Christian, Pliable is persuaded to enter with him upon his pilgrimage to the Celestial City.

“Well, neighbour Obstinate, said Pliable, I begin to come to a point; I intend to go along with this good man, and to cast in my lot with him.”

“Now I saw in my dream,” says Bunyan, “that when Obstinate had gone back, Christian and Pliable went talking over the plain.” And is not this a life-like portrait of Lot and his wife in their flight from the town of Sodom? Christian, as we know, prosecutes his journey amid many dangers, difficulties, and drawbacks, and is saved. Lot, in like manner, pursues his, and escapes; this is one line of the parallel. Pliable, as we know, never gets across the Slough of Despond, but turns back and perishes in the City of Destruction. Lot’s wife looks back from behind her husband, and becomes a pillar of salt; this is the other line of the parallel. And the great lesson to be learnt is just this, it is not enough to be pliable,

it is not enough to be moved. When Paul preached concerning righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come, Felix trembled, and said, "Go thy way for this time, when I have a convenient season I will send for thee;" and under the preaching of the same man, Agrippa was constrained to exclaim, "Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian." Ah! we may be all but set out for the heavenly country; nay, we may have actually taken the road, like this poor woman, and yet perish. "No man having put his hand to the plough and *looking back*, is fit for the kingdom of God."

That a person may be almost saved, and yet lost, will still further appear if we consider—

2. That this woman not only consented to join the party in their flight, but actually *took hold of an angel's hand*. Between her and her husband, as between the two daughters, a heavenly messenger goes, and grasping each by the hand, hurries them away out of the reach of immediate danger. Ah! think of this. She, like the rest, felt the pressure of an angel's hand; and as her feet bounded over the plain, her heart doubtless thrilled in response to the angelic grasp. And after all she perished.

It is told of a celebrated man, how when dying, he sent for his chaplain, and asked,

Is it possible for one to perish who once loved Christ? The chaplain replied, No, it is not possible. Well, said the dying man, I am safe, for I once loved Christ. But we must guard against self-deception, and we must beware of trusting to moods and feelings. Our sweet visions of heaven in our more fanciful hours, our soft emotions in our weaker and more tender moments, may all be as if we had an angel by the hand, and were marching on to glory; but we must make sure that we have Christ's own hand, or that Christ has ours. Nor will it do to rest content with some impression we experienced in days long gone by. We must not only begin, but end with that pierced hand in ours, and say—

“I will not let thee go ; thou Help in time of need ;
Heap ill on ill, I trust thee still,
Even when it seems that thou would'st slay indeed !
Do as thou wilt with me ;
I yet will cling to thee ;
Hide thou thy face, yet, Help in time of need !
I will not let thee go.”

Oh for faith and love like this ! then never should it be said of any of us, *Almost saved, yet lost.*

That a person may be almost saved, and yet lost, will appear if we consider—

3. *The distance to which Lot's wife went.*

The angels brought her forth, and her husband and two daughters, and set them outside the city. And it came to pass when they had brought them forth abroad, that one said to them, "Escape now for thy life." They had done all, it would seem, that was necessary for angels to do, else they would not have left them. Ministering spirits sent forth to minister to them who shall be heirs of salvation, they ministered, we may be sure, to the utmost of their power, and *yet this woman perished.*

Ah! "when once the Master of the house is risen up, and hath shut to the door, and ye begin to stand without and to knock at the door, saying, Lord, Lord, open to us; and he shall answer and say unto you, I know you not whence ye are. Then shall ye begin to say, We have eaten and drunk in thy presence, and thou hast taught in our streets. But he shall say, I tell you, I know you not whence ye are; depart from me, all ye workers of iniquity."

Are there any now reading these words who will one day say, "O Lord, we have heard thee preached for many years, year after year; we have oftentimes eaten and drunk at thy table, communion after communion," and to whom the Lord will, notwithstanding, reply,

“Depart, depart, I know you not?” It may be so. Hearken to those awful words with which Bunyan closes the first part of his great book :—

“Now, while I was gazing upon all these things”—upon the glorious entrance of the pilgrims within the Celestial City—“I turned my head to look back, and I saw Ignorance come up to the river-side ; but he soon got over, and *that* without half the difficulty which the other two men met with.” Ferried over the river of death by one *Vain-hope*, he at length got up to the gate, and was asked for his certificate. So he fumbled in his bosom for one, and found none. Then said the men that looked over the gate, Have you not got a certificate? But the man answered never a word. So they went and told the King ; but the King would not so much as come down to see the man, but commanded the two Shining Ones who had conducted Christian and Hopeful to the city to go out and take Ignorance, and bind him hand and foot, and have him away.

“Then I saw in my dream,” says Bunyan, “that they took him, and bound him hand and foot, and carried him away through the air to the door that I saw in the side of the hill, and put him in *there*. Then I saw that there was a way to hell *from the very gate of heaven*,

as well as from the City of Destruction.”—
ALMOST SAVED, YET LOST.

In conclusion, allow me to add, that I have not sought to illustrate and enforce this solemn truth in order to disturb the peace of any truly humble and believing soul; for, blessed be God, no such one will finally perish. But I do set this awful truth before you, Christian reader, whoever you may be, to warn you against the sin of worldliness, and the consequent danger of apostasy. Oh! love not the world, neither the things that are in the world; if any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. And the world passeth away. Alas! that any man should imperil his immortal soul for that which is daily slipping out of his hand, and slipping all the faster, like a handful of sand, for the firmness with which he grasps it. Yes, the world is passing away, and the lust thereof. Soon, soon, will even desire fail, because man goeth to his long home; but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever.

VI.

GOD AND MAMMON.

“And Balaam answered and said unto the servants of Balak, If Balak would give me his house full of silver and gold, I cannot go beyond the word of the Lord my God, to do less or more.”—Numb. xxii. 18.

1.

TEMPTATION.

FROM the summit of one of his native hills, Balak, ruler of the Moabites, looked down upon the thousands of Israel encamped on his borders over against Jericho. Sihon, king of the Amorites, was slain, and Heshbon, his chief city, was in the hands of the victorious Hebrews. Og, too, the giant-king of Bashan, had perished, with all his people; in the recent battle at Edrei; and now for Balak, son of Zippor, there seemed no help in war, nor strength to resist in the arm of man. He knew not that God had forbidden Israel to meddle with Moab, whilst the recollection of his inhospitable treatment of them when

he refused them a passage through his kingdom, served to intensify his distress. "Now shall this company lick up all that are round about us, as the ox licketh up the grass of the field. A word from Balaam would surely blast this people, and stay their victorious career." Thus, terror-stricken, he addressed his confederates the elders of Midian.

Twenty days' journey being ended, ambassadors from Balak found themselves at Balaam's gate on the banks of the Euphrates, and were cordially received:—"Lodge here this night," said he to the princes of Moab, "and I will bring you word again, as the Lord shall speak unto me."

And had he never heard before of Israel, that he required to consult God? Impossible. The chosen people had not been brought out of the land of Egypt by God's high hand and outstretched arm, without shaking the surrounding nations. Not for forty years had they, a mighty host, wandered in a dry and thirsty land where no water was, without being known, far as the Euphrates valley, as a people whom God had conspicuously blessed. Must it not have struck the Assyrian prophet, therefore, and *at once*, that it was a vain thing to entertain, even for a moment, the thought of cursing such a people?

How ominous that first consultation! Better for Balaam had it been to have dismissed the ambassadors and said:—

“Gentlemen, I perceive clearly that I cannot conscientiously go with you on this errand. We have all heard of the wonderful things which God has done for this people. It will be wiser for you and your king to agree with this adversary quickly whiles ye are in the way with him. This is a stone on which ye cannot fall without being broken, and on whomsoever it shall fall, it will grind him to powder.”

Had Balaam spoken thus it had been well; but for a night he deferred his answer.

Now, where one's duty is not clear, deliberation, careful and even prolonged, is right and reasonable. Young man, young woman, in regard to all such matters sit down first and count the cost before you begin to build your tower. “Look before you leap.” But in matters pertaining to conscience, when duty shines as the sun, to hesitate is to be lost. It is the halt that precedes the turning aside to tread the downward path. Let Paul, rather than Balaam, be your pattern here. “When,” saith the great Apostle of the Gentiles, “it pleased God, who separated me from my mother's womb, and called me by his grace, to reveal his Son in me,

that I might preach him among the heathen, *immediately I conferred not with flesh and blood.*" First thoughts like these how precious! laden are they with heaven's own help to aid us in the way that is right.

Not so acted Balaam. Why? The princes of Moab appealed to his besetting lust. They carried in their hands the rewards of divination. In that soul of his, lit up as few souls have been, sat enthroned, nevertheless, the demon Avarice. Hence the fatal hesitation. Hence the conference with flesh and blood, under the semblance of a consultation with the Almighty.

In the silent watches of the night, God, however, came to Balaam, and said—"What men are these with thee? And Balaam said, Balak the son of Zippor, king of Moab, hath sent unto me, saying, Behold there is a people come out of Egypt, which covereth the face of the earth; come now, curse me them; peradventure I shall be able to overcome them, and drive them out.

"And God said unto Balaam: Thou shalt not go with them; thou shalt not curse the people, for they are blessed."

Oh! that this divine utterance would reach the ears of the men of to-day who, to conceal their selfishness and greed, can hold consulta-

tions with the Divine Being, can build churches, and found orphanages, and endow theological chairs, and yet defraud the widow and the orphan, consign hundreds to a life of penury, and send some to premature graves! Ye of the rising generation, walk not in their ways; hearken to this sacred oracle, and understand it to mean—“*Ye cannot serve God and Mammon.*”

As the voice of God died away in the silence of the night the Assyrian prophet no doubt murmured—What splendid honours lost! What princely rewards gone! Something, however, tells me I must not curse this people.

“And Balaam rose up in the morning, and said unto the princes of Balak, Get you into your land: for the Lord refuseth to give me leave to go with you.”

Perilous reply! He tells the truth; but not the whole truth, nor even the most important part of the truth. Halting still, he cannot bring himself to dismiss the Tempter at once and for ever. He says, indeed, that God has forbidden him to go; but he omits to say that God has utterly forbidden him to curse. Had he said this, the men would probably never have come back to tempt him; but, replying as he did, he leaves them to infer his reason for not going with them; and that inference

was, that the rewards of divination were not handsome enough.

Alas for man or woman, young or old, who, when tempted, cannot reply in such a way as not to be misunderstood! How many thousands are ruined so! They resist the evil; but they do it so ambiguously, or with so good a grace, as to leave the impression that they are not in earnest. Need we wonder that the Tempter should return to such people, and return re-enforced, and enter in and dwell with them, and make their latter end worse than the first?

Well had it been for the son of Beor had his answer at first been clear, full, and not to be misinterpreted; but

“So sweetly he bade them adieu,
They thought that he bade them return.”

2.

REBELLION.

AND return they did. No; not the same, but others more numerous and more honourable than the first. The inference drawn from the prophet's refusal to go had been as we anticipated. Hence the increase in the number of the ambassadors. Hence the more choice selec-

tion. Hence the unrestricted offer, the *carte-blanche*:—"Thus saith Balak, the son of Zippor, Let nothing, I pray thee, hinder thee from coming unto me ; for I will promote thee unto very great honour, and will do whatsoever thou sayest unto me. Come, therefore, I pray thee, curse me this people." So spake the princes of Moab in the name of their king.

With man or woman who begins by trifling with temptation it is ever so. Terrible, and with tiger leap, it comes back. Reader, be decided in the beginning. Learn to say "No," emphatically, and summarily dismiss the Destroyer. Will Balaam now apologise for his former misleading reply, and confess that the Lord had utterly forbidden him to curse the people? Alas! if it was difficult for him to refuse the men at first, how much more difficult now! now that the golden bait dangles more temptingly than ever before his avaricious eyes. What bodes his boastful talk? Does it not betray the images amid which his thoughts are lingering? "If Balak would give me his house full of silver and gold, I cannot go beyond the word of the Lord, my God, to do less or more."

And yet this is no mere boast. A lying prophet this man will not be. What a struggle between an enlightened conscience and a covet-

ous heart! Once again, in the stillness of the night, he ponders and consults. Not now does he want to know what his duty is; *that* he has already been told: but having, contrary to the Divine will, resolved to go, he goes to see if God will not change *his* mind. The tempted son of Beor becomes in turn the Tempter, and the Tempter of the Almighty. Who ever yet dared to do this with impunity? Oh! dreadful wickedness, yet not uncommon! When men have once resolved to have their own way, what do we find them oftentimes doing? Endeavouring to justify the step they are about to take: toning down the wicked thing so as to make it look "not so bad after all." "Let me go," saith the wilful man. "There is no danger. I shall take care. Leave it to *me*."

Shameless boy! Art thou wiser than thy father? Wilt thou not be warned by One who knows full well the slippery places thou wouldst tread? But if thou *wilt* go, go.

"If the men come to call thee, rise up, and go with them; but yet the word which I shall say unto thee, that shalt thou do."

Spoken by God to Balaam, as a father would speak to his erring, wilful child! in grief, as if thereby to touch the wandering heart, and keep it back from going. No more powerful way can

even God say, "Go *not*," than when in sorrow he says, "Go," but—you are doing wrong; go, but—think not you can solve the problem, and serve both God and Mammon; go, however, and try it: "the word which I shall say unto thee, that shalt thou do."

Sometimes God speaks thus conditionally; but the condition is as sorrowfully and suggestively ironical as the permission. Only "if the men come to call thee, go." What is this but holding up the mirror to nature, that the man may see his worse self in it and repent. How deceitful the human heart! "I cannot, and will not do it;" so speaks oftentimes the heart of sinful man. I shall not take the initiative; but—"if the men come to call me"—what then? He whose principles are so weak and pliable is already prepared to meet the Tempter more than half-way. It was so with the son of Beor. He did not wait till the men came to call him. He failed to apprehend the Divine irony. With the early morning he sprang from his couch, cast his travelling rug over his beautiful white ass, and *he* calls the *men*. It is the haste that characterises the guilty action. His eagerness to be gone is feverish, nervous, and not without dismal foreboding. Does he pursue his journey like a man

who is conscious of doing the right thing? Tell me, did ever man go counter to the Higher Will, and hold upon his way in peace? What fears were in the way! What phantoms created by the consciousness that all is not as it should be! Well if such fears and phantoms should force him to retrace his steps ere yet it be too late. But it was not so with Balaam. Not till the angel of the Lord stood in the way for an adversary against him did he offer to retrace his steps, and then it was too late.

Whatever view we may take of that portion of the narrative where the dumb ass, speaking with man's voice, forbade the madness of the prophet, it matters little. Whether taken literally or figuratively, the lessons intended to be taught are plain. "We see here a series of incidents all meant to convey to an erring soul that its ways are not pleasing to the Lord; we have here a most solemnising thought that even the unintelligent creation may be more sensitive to God's presence, and to an outrage of the Divine law, than a human soul steeped in sin; we have here something so startling as to awaken the soul from its death-sleep as with the voice of a thousand thunders. Tell me, is history, is the common experience of life, not full of instances of men who advance blindly, boldly, unconsciously

to manifest destruction? All around see it; but the man sees it not. The ears that will not hearken are stopped; the eyes that will not see are sealed; the neck that will not bend is stiffened into iron."

Then happens something so unexpected as to shake for a moment the transgressor out of his dream. When *this* ass opens her mouth, then the sinner cannot but open his ears. Oh! the great glare of unnatural illumination which often follows the commission of a great act of sin! It was even so with the son of Beor. Then the spirit stood before him. "Then Balaam said unto the angel of the Lord, I have sinned, for I knew not that thou stoodest in the way against me: now, therefore, if it displease thee, I will get me back again."

Too late! Blessed, indeed, are those who, finding their way to the abyss in mercy blocked up, take warning and return. Blessed are those who, arrested in their mad career, brought, say through their own folly and sin, to the very verge of the grave, nevertheless lay to heart the lesson, and show by their future walk that they have not learned that lesson in vain. It was not so with Balaam the son of Beor. If he was sincerely penitent, why stayed he to argue once more? Had he not sufficiently considered this

matter already? Why not at once go back without more ado? "I have sinned." Good. The next proper thing to say is, I have also forsaken my sin. But no. The son of Beor must excuse himself on the ground of ignorance:—"I knew not that thou stoodest in the way against me." This was true, and at the same time false; and shows how men may deceive themselves, and try to impose even upon God. He knew not, indeed, that the avenging angel stood in the way; but he knew that the way in which he rode was just that in which he had every reason to expect to meet the avenging angel. It is no good excuse to plead painful consequences when a man knows full well that he is where he should not be, where such consequences are but the natural harvest of the seed that has been sown. Such pleading shows that the man has not yet awaked to the odiousness of his sin, or the full horror of his situation. "If it displease thee I will get me back again." "Of course," the angel might have answered, "it displeases me. Thy way is perverse before me."

If it displease thee! What state of heart does this disclose? "If it be evil in thine eyes"—Is the son of Beor in doubt? Oh no! He is only in difficulty. He has come so far, that,

notwithstanding all that has happened, he cannot make up his mind to go back. He would fain not offend God further; but his heart is set on the house full of silver and gold, and promotion to honour. What can the angel say to such a man? What but to repeat his "Go on." "It is easier and better for thee, Balaam, to go back now than it will ever be again; but I know thy heart: Go on—and see where this will land thee. If thou wilt place thyself in circumstances where doubtless thou wilt find it hard, if not impossible, to maintain thine integrity; where thou wilt be tempted to have recourse to miserable shifts unworthy of a man of genius, and inconsistent, too, with righteousness—thou shalt go. Solve the problem if thou canst, and see whether it be possible to be a true servant of God and a worshipper of gold."

Fearful permission! Fatal command! Oh that he had understood the irony of the thing! Oh that we all understood, when, in like manner, God speaks to us! Lord, lead us not into temptation. Lord, let us not wantonly or wilfully rush into temptation. Restrain us by thy grace. Teach our hearts to love thy law, and make our feet swift to run in the way of thy commandments.

3.

PRIEST AND PROPHET.

TIME rolls on, and Balaam and Balak meet. The reception accorded to the Mesopotamian seer is cordial, and accompanied with splendid promises on the part of the king. And Balak said unto Balaam ! " Did I not earnestly send to call thee ? Wherefore camest thou not at first ? Am not I able to promote thee to honour ? " And Balaam said unto Balak, " Lo ! I am come unto thee. Have I now any power at all to say anything ? The word that God putteth in my mouth, that shall I speak. "

Well spoken ! and, we believe, sincerely spoken ; determined to speak the truth was this strange man, and yet at heart avaricious ! Let us see how it succeeds.

The morning dawns, and the elders of Midian, the king of Moab, and the son of Beor, we may behold ascending the high places of Baal. The soothsayer must see the objects in order to spell-bind them. From the lofty height the prophet looks down upon the myriads of Israel in the distance. Having ordered seven altars to be built ; having sacrificed seven oxen and seven

rams; having, according to the priestly usage of those times, examined their entrails; having, in short, gone through all the manœuvres of a priest, Balaam returns to the top of the hill, and there—with outstretched hand towards Israel, impassioned, majestic, the spirit of inspiration within him—speaks, and speaks in a strain the very opposite of that to which his mercenary views predisposed him.

“Balak, the king of Moab, hath brought me from Aram, out of the mountains of the East, saying, Come, curse me Jacob, and come, defy Israel. How shall I curse whom God hath not cursed? or how shall I defy whom the Lord hath not defied?” Then, stamping his foot, he adds: “for from the top of these rocks I see him, and from the hills I behold him: lo! the people shall dwell alone, they shall not be reckoned among the nations. Who can count the dust of Jacob, and number the fourth part of Israel? Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his.”

Balak is confounded. “What,” he says, “did I not take thee to *curse* mine enemies? And lo! thou hast *blessed* them altogether.” And Balaam answered: “Must I not take heed to speak that which the Lord hath put in my mouth?”

“But come,” says the son of Zippor, “come with me to another place.” The eulogistic strain in which the seer had broken out, being so very different from the doom expected and desired, Balak appears to have thought that the spectacle of the far-extended and orderly-arranged camp, with its thousands of tents, and the tabernacle occupying the central space, had dazzled and captivated the eye and imagination of the Assyrian prophet; and hence, for a second experiment, he makes choice of a spot from which only a small section of the camp could be seen, and where, on the same preliminary offerings being made, Balaam retires, once more practises his auguries, and then returns to the expectant princes of Moab. From the summit of this second eminence, nearer to the encampment of Israel than the former, and reckoned in consequence more favourable ground from which to devote the people to destruction, Balaam discerns the outskirts of the Hebrew host, and again the spirit of inspiration seizes him, and he speaks even more favourably of Israel than at first.

“Rise up Balak, and hear; hearken unto me, thou son of Zippor.” To execrate, to consign such a people to destruction, is impossible. God has entered into solemn covenant with their ancestors, and made many signal

promises to them, both of temporal and spiritual blessings; and "God is not a man that he should lie, neither the son of man that he should repent. Hath he said, and shall he not do? or hath he spoken, and shall he not make it good? Behold I have received commandment to bless; and he hath blessed, and I cannot reverse it. He hath not beheld [in the sense of general or hopeless apostasy] iniquity in Jacob, neither hath he seen perverseness in Israel. The Lord his God is with him, and the shout of a king is among them. God brought them out of Egypt. He hath, as it were, the strength of an unicorn. Surely no enchantment against Israel can prevail, neither is there any divination against Jacob. What hath God done for them! *that* shall be henceforth the wonder. Behold the people shall rise up as a great lion, yon people encamped in the distance; and like a young lion shall they spring to their feet, nor shall they lie down until they eat of the prey and drink of the blood of the slain."

"Stop," exclaims Balak, pale with fear and chilled with horror, "If you cannot curse them, do not bless them." But Balaam answered: "Told not I thee, saying, All that the Lord speaketh, that I must do?"

For the third time the scene is changed. If Balaam be unable to accomplish all that Balak desires, he may, nevertheless, undo what has been done, and take back his blessing. From the summit of Peor, as before from Pisgah, the elders of Midian, along with Balak and Balaam, survey the happy people. Again, as before, blood streams from the altars, but the son of Beor will no longer look for omens. He casts aside the priest, and as prophet, and prophet alone, will rise to the occasion. He will use no more enchantments. Borne before the inspiration of the Almighty, he approaches ever nearer the true prophet of Israel, until, wound up to the highest pitch, he exclaims—

“Balaam, the son of Beor, hath said; the man whose eyes are open hath said; he hath said who heard the words of God, who, prostrate, saw the vision of the Almighty, but having his eyes open. How goodly are thy tents, O Jacob, and thy tabernacles, O Israel! As the valleys are they spread forth, as cedars by the water’s edge, and as the trees of Paradise. . . . *Blessed is he that blesseth thee, and cursed is he that curseth thee.*”

Frozen to the soul is the son of Zippor. In oriental fashion, in utter horror and vexation he strikes his fists together, and bursts out in

burning wrath—"I called thee to curse mine enemies, and behold thou hast blessed them these three times. Go. Flee from my presence. I thought to promote thee to great honour; but, lo, the Lord hath kept thee back from honour."

But the man inspired is the real king of the hour. "Balak," he says, "sit thou down and hear, by way of conclusion to this interview, what shall befall this people in the latter days." Sublimely inspired, yet conscious withal of his own sordid motives in coming hither, Balaam, the son of Beor, saith—

"I shall see him, but not now; I shall behold him, but not nigh. There shall come a Star out of Jacob, and a Sceptre shall rise out of Israel that shall smite through the children of Moab, and destroy all the children of Sheth. Out of Jacob shall come *HE that shall have dominion.*"

All in all, the Assyrian prophet has acquitted himself well. He has magnified his office. He has sustained, ay even surpassed, his reputation as a sooth-sayer, that is, a truth-sayer. Never again will he soar so high or sing so sublimely. Oh! what is wealth, what is honour in comparison with a gift like this, the noblest power that man can possess, the capacity for

being raised to that ecstatic state in which the human spirit can see eye to eye with God? Invaluable endowment! Oh that Balaam had gone home and enjoyed, without the world's reward, that communion which the world cannot give, and which the world cannot take away!

4.

THE ISSUE OF THE EXPERIMENT.

Alas! there is no lust, when once it gets possession of a man, like the lust for gold. The spirit of inspiration gone, the sordid devil takes his seat once more on the throne of Balaam's heart. The rewards of divination! The house full of silver and gold! The promotion to great honour! Where are these? Is nothing to come out of this long journey from the mountains of the East? The scornful, wrathful words of Balak only echo in reply. Here is a man who will not lie, who will not sacrifice his reputation as an honourable, truthful man, and yet determined to have the world's coin and the world's rewards. On his way homeward he tarries for a while among the Midianites, and there sends for Balak. "God,"

he tells him, "will not curse the good," to that truth he still adheres; "but," saith he, "God will curse the wicked. If, Balak, thou canst make the good wicked, they will curse themselves; they will bring down upon their own heads the just judgments of God. Take your handsomest daughters, then, ye elders of Midian; array them in goodly apparel; put them in the way of the sons of Israel, who will soon become enamoured of their beauty; and, when they have charmed and enchanted them, let them say, O ye illustrious youths, we have homes of our own, and parents, and friends, and plenty. Still, if you love us, be pleased to give proof thereof, by conforming to our customs and religion."

Thus were the children of Israel snared, and led into idolatry and wide-spread licentiousness, and what the wicked prophet predicted actually came to pass. The people brought down the curse upon themselves. No fewer than twenty-four thousand of them perished, some by plague, and others by massacre at the hands of those who had stood true to God.

It is hard to believe that a man like Balaam, restrained by conscience, full of poetry and sublime feelings, could stoop so low. But, even in this nineteenth century of the Christian era,

what will men not do for the sake of wealth, for the sake of luxurious ease? What have men, hitherto respected and counted respectable, not done? We hesitate to record the depths to which the love of gold has plunged them. We will not record them, but the dark and diabolical advice of Balaam is only one of the miserable shifts to which men have recourse, whose better nature yields to the insatiable cravings of avarice. The son of Beor, I believe, was loaded with gifts. He had tried that perilous experiment, and failed. He had won the gold no doubt, and ingeniously too, in perfect keeping with his character as a soothsayer. His advice, vile though it was, was still founded on eternal truth: make the good bad, and they will curse themselves; but did not this disclose a gulf of wickedness that makes one shudder to contemplate? How are the mighty fallen!

Will a man like this, great and talented though he be, be permitted to enjoy these ill-got gains? No. Never more will he climb the mountains of the East, never more will he wander by the banks of the Euphrates. He went down into the abyss like a great star, and his beautiful, glowing, sublime light was extinguished for ever.

“Moses, arise, be thou my avenging angel.” Thus speaks the Almighty—“Vex the Midianites, and smite them, for they have beguiled you.” Doomed son of Beor! it is now too late. Perhaps, like some horror-haunted murderer, thou art even willing to be apprehended; and apprehended thou art. Who for millions would have this man’s mind? this man’s end? A man who could sublimely, and I believe, conscientiously say, “Let me die the death of the righteous,” obliged to die the death of the wicked, an enemy of God, and of God’s people! We see him on the battle-field—torn, distracted, all that he had bartered heaven to win, reputation, gold, all going, and all gone. The avenging angel now wields the sword he had only formerly drawn, and Balaam, the son of Beor, falls upon the spears of the victorious Israelites.

Woe unto them who walk in the way of Cain, who run greedily after the error of Balaam for reward. It is indeed a soul-destroying error, nor do I know of any more striking illustration within the boards of the Bible of the truth of our Lord’s own most pregnant saying:—“YE CANNOT SERVE GOD AND MAMMON.”

VII.

A SPRING DAY WITH JESUS.

“Can God furnish a table in the wilderness?”—PSALM lxxviii. 19; MATTHEW xiv. 13-23; MARK vi. 30-46; LUKE ix. 10-17; JOHN vi. 1-15.

ENTHUSIASTIC crowds from all parts of the country are on their way to Jerusalem, for the Passover is at hand. Those who live by the shore of the Sea of Galilee are particularly excited. The disciples of Jesus had just completed amongst them their first Evangelistic tour, teaching, and preaching, and healing. A strange rumour also, which had been set afloat by the murderer of the Baptist, had just come to their ears, that the Master of those disciples who had stirred them so deeply was no less a personage than John risen from the dead. No wonder, then, that in excited crowds they should gather around the Saviour, and be anxious to see his own mighty works, and to hear his own not less mighty words.

But there is a limit to human strength, and

Jesus and his disciples were men. Like other men, they stood in need of rest and retirement.

On the north-eastern shore of the Galilean lake—not far from Bethsaida-Julias, was a secluded spot, a quiet resting-place for the weary who would flee for a little from the din and bustle of the busy world. Hither Jesus invites his exhausted disciples in the beautiful language of one who knew their frame and remembered that they were dust—"Come ye, by yourselves alone, into yon peaceful retreat on the other side of the sea, and rest awhile."

And so as quietly as possible the Master and his disciples withdrew from the crowd which had gathered now at Capernaum, entered the boat which they seem to have had at their service, and began to cross over the lake. It was a beautiful day in Spring. As with cool and measured stroke the disciples rowed across, or set their sail to woo the vernal breeze, what may their thoughts and feelings have been? What, above all, the thoughts and feelings of Jesus? Does it not move the soul with strangely-mingled emotions, to see all nature array herself in robes of living green, and to hear the birds sing among the branches, just as we are laying the head of our dearest in the tomb? It is not improbable that, as our Lord

glided over the waters that Spring morning, feelings akin to these filled his bosom. He, too, had been deeply moved by the tidings of the tragic end of his Fore-runner. "Yet a little while," he may have been saying within himself, "and I too shall be numbered with the slain."

At last they reached the other side, and hauled their boat up on the pebbly beach.

O what a soothing season of quietude the Lord and his "little children" would have had among the hills! One is almost sorry that it was not to be. And it was not to be. Observing the disciples with their Master enter the boat, and move off towards the eastern shore, the people forthwith struck northward along the margin of the lake, some on foot, others in such conveyances as were at hand, and crossing the Jordan at the fords, arrived, many of them, before Jesus and his company had landed. How patient, how pitiful, was Jesus! He was not displeased with their importunity. He saw that they were as sheep without a shepherd, and his compassions failed not. Weary and sad though he must have been, again did he minister to them according to their necessities. He healed their sick, and taught them many things.

It was Howard the philanthropist who said, "Our indulgences must give way to another man's convenience; and our convenience to another man's necessity; and our necessity to another man's extremity." We know in whose school that noble man learned this noble sentiment. To that school let us go and learn it too. Let us see Jesus, in need of rest, longing for solitude and thwarted in his desire, yet gladly giving up his own purpose, entering with delight into the new position which Providence had thus opened up to him, accepting the feast offered him—the luxury of doing good—and consenting to give the feast to which God was manifestly calling him.

The day at last began to wear away, and the evening to draw on apace. About three o'clock in the afternoon the Lord said to Philip, "Whence shall we buy bread that these may eat?" To which Philip artlessly replied, "Two hundred pennyworth of bread is not sufficient for them, that every one may take a little."

Childlike man! Did he not observe the pleasing smile on the face of Jesus when he asked the question, as much as to say: "Philip, do you know what I am going to do? I am going to spread for this people a table in the wilderness!" No. The most simple-minded of

all the disciples, he was the last to catch hold of so sublime a purpose.

And is it not thus that all God's great works commence? Silently, unobtrusively, yet with profound suggestiveness, is the germ sown from which ere long must shoot up the great tree, amid whose branches the fowls of heaven may lodge. Nor were Philip's brethren more discerning on the present occasion than himself. It does not appear to have occurred to any of them that their Lord had resolved to satisfy, in a miraculous manner, the mouths of this great company with good things. And so, further on in the afternoon, after our Lord's suggestion had for some time been working in their minds, they interrupt him in his teaching, press upon him to bring his words to a close, and to send the people away that they may find something to eat. "It is not necessary that they should go away," said the Lord; "Give ye them to eat." Strange command! Will they not now perceive that the Master means something extraordinary? Let us not wonder at their surprise; a surprise so naïvely expressed by Andrew, the next most simple-minded of them all:—"There is a lad here which hath five barley-loaves and two small fishes; but what are they among so many?" Who can fail

to discover a touch of humour on the part of the Evangelist who records these sayings of his brother disciples? He, when he penned his gospel, was in a position to contrast those sayings with the splendid display of power which the Lord of them all manifested that afternoon in Spring by the shore of the Galilean sea. It is with the gentlest ripple of a smile playing around his lips that he tells us what Andrew then said: "There is only *one* in all this great crowd who has anything to suggest in the way of food. And that one is a little one—a mere boy; and the little that the boy has is of the humblest kind, and exceedingly scanty."

So spake John's child-like brother that afternoon, now long gone by. Little did Andrew know what was in the heart, ay, and in the hand of his Blessed Master. Little did any of the disciples know. No wonder he exclaimed, "What are these among so many?"

Bring them hither to me, said the Lord, and make the people sit down. Not only would the Saviour not work a miracle beyond what was necessary, but he would also do what he intended to do, decently and in order. What valuable lessons for us all here! Sometimes we encounter persons who seem to think that God will do wonders for them, regardless

of what they do for themselves. Vain expectation. Oh! let us not sit with folded hands expecting any such miracle. Let us bestir ourselves, and make a good use of what we already have—of our time, opportunities, and talents; of what measure of health and strength we may possess; of the bread we have already in our possession. Then, and only then, need we look for the Divine blessing, which can marvellously increase our stores, and cause us even to sing, “A little that a righteous man hath is better than the riches of many wicked. . . . The upright shall not be ashamed in the evil time; and in the days of famine they shall be satisfied.”

Orderly, too, let us go about our work, as the Master went about his. There are few who have studied the wonderful transactions of that day who have failed to notice the beautiful arrangement of that great company of five thousand souls. In groups of fifty and a hundred they reclined on the green grass, arrayed in the bright colours which even the poorest in the East delight to wear; thus presenting to the eye the picturesque appearance of a hundred fifties of flower-beds in a garden. Beautiful garden of the Lord! What a pleasing hum of voices of men, and women, and

children—pleasing at least to the ear that is ever open to the cry of the needy. And as the sun went down behind the western hills, shooting across the lake his golden rays, and flooding the scene with his mellow evening light, may we not wish we had been there? Mysterious Lord of the garden! What is he going to do? Hushed were all voices as he raised his hand to heaven and thanked the great Giver of all good for the evening meal, of which they were going to partake.

Then Jesus took the barley cakes and brake them, and gave them to the disciples, and the disciples to the multitude. And the two fishes divided he among them all. What took place in his hands and theirs, ere all the people were served, who can conceive? Here our poor powers of description fail us. Another eye than the eye of the imagination or fancy is needed in order to understand further. May God give you that eye, my reader! May God give that eye to me! Let us trust where we cannot trace. All things are possible with God. Lord, I believe this : help thou mine unbelief.

Stupendous truly was that mighty work of Jesus that afternoon in Spring, on the Galilean shore, over eighteen hundred years ago; but there is no event in the Gospel narratives so

well attested. Not one, or two, or three, but all the four Evangelists relate this miracle, and that with such minuteness, and with such graphic detail, as none but eye-witnesses could have supplied.

But although we cannot follow the Lord in his mysterious operations, except with the eye of faith, we may, nevertheless, note what is scarcely less remarkable, to wit, the prominent position which he assumed on that momentous occasion. It was the position of the father of a family; but it was more than that. It was the father at the head of his own table, and the feast a passover feast. After the thanksgiving, the Lord distributed the food as the father was accustomed to do at the paschal meal. Oh, it was not simply to satisfy hunger that day, that the Saviour spread his table in the wilderness! Did he not intend thereby to set forth himself as the Bread of Life? The gracious truths concerning himself which he proclaimed the day following were now, beforehand, being represented in symbol. As he distributes to the disciples, in order that they may distribute to the people, does he not seem to say to the eye, what in a few hours he will say to the ear—"My Father is now giving you the true bread from heaven. . . . I am

the bread of life. . . . I am the living bread which came down from heaven. If any man eat of this bread he shall live for ever. And the bread that I will give is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world."

These great and gracious truths the Blessed Redeemer uttered in the synagogue at Capernaum, on the other side of the lake, the following day. These great and gracious truths he is proclaiming now in the greater temple of the Universe, with the green Spring sward for a floor, and for a roof the vaulted sky aglow with the crimson rays of the setting sun.

It was but very few in that immense multitude who understood these things, and those few understood them but dimly. Ere another sun has risen and set the enthusiasm of this crowd will have vanished, and the great work of Jesus will be found to have been wrought in vain. No ; not altogether in vain. It will have served one grand purpose. It will have separated the spiritual from the carnal amongst the followers of the Saviour ; whilst it will have served to send off those who had no spiritual affinity with him, it will have drawn closer to his heart those who owned his potent spell, and will have constrained them to say, as the vast multitude moves off, "Lord, to whom shall

we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life. And we believe, and are sure, that thou art that Christ, the Son of the living God."

All these things will take place on the morrow; but that morrow has not yet come. The people who so soon are to forsake the Lord have been eating all this while of the Lord's Supper, that wondrous repast, planned in his wisdom, and provided by his power.

At last it draws to a close, and when all had eaten and were satisfied, the Lord Jesus said to his disciples: "Gather up the fragments that remain, that nothing be lost."

The fragments that remain! O! I see those disciples that afternoon go forth, each with his basket, to collect those mysteriously-produced fragments; and I see them return each with his basket full. With the blessing of the Lord resting on their labours, they had sown liberally, and now this is how they reap. Beautiful "symbol," it has been truly said, "of that love which exhausts not itself by loving, but after all its outgoings upon others, abides itself far richer than it would have otherwise done." Would you, my reader, have your own heart enriched? Grudge not to bestow your affections on proper objects. Would you have your own minds improved? Be not

slow to communicate what knowledge you have. Would you increase the talents which God has given you? Employ them well. Would you return to Jesus with twelve baskets full? Go forth liberally with your five barley loaves and your two small fishes. Above all, beware of that narrow, selfish spirit, that cannot understand how it should be more blessed to give than to receive. O what a feast is spread at your very door, if only you would open your eyes and see! "Pray heaven for a *human* heart."

"Howe'er it be, it seems to me,

'Tis only noble to be good.

Kind hearts are more than coronets,

And simple faith than Norman blood."

The fragments that remain! Yes, ye who have fragments to gather, gather them up, *that nothing be lost*. Spoken like God, who will have nothing wasted either in heaven or on earth, or under the earth! Was not this mighty Worker himself sent forth as the great in-gatherer, that nothing might be lost? Did not the Great Father above give his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life? May we be of the number who believe on the name of the only begotten Son of God! For

the day is coming when this same Jesus will once again give the word of command to gather in, that nothing be lost; when "he shall send his angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other."

O, if we believe that this same Jesus will one day come in the clouds of heaven to judge mankind, we shall not be surprised at this mighty work of his wrought by the Sea of Galilee. Nor shall we wonder that the five thousand, at the close of their marvellous repast, should have sought to crown him as the King Messiah on the spot. Nor shall we marvel that the Twelve should have thought to do so likewise. "But no," saith he who came to rule in the hearts of men; "my kingdom is not of this world. It is no purpose of mine to wade through slaughter to a throne. Foolish people! What mean ye by this proposal? What were this but rebellion and ultimate ruin? Our position to-day is sufficiently perilous as it is. Disperse."

And so the Lord dismisses his disciples first. All loath to go, they, nevertheless, obey. The boat that rides at anchor near the shore they haul up on the beach, and re-embark; and,

with one longing, lingering look at their Master left behind with the vast assemblage, they dip their oars into the wave and make for Bethsaida, the city of Andrew and Peter, on the western side of the sea.

The disciples gone, the people too disperse ; but not until Jesus had fled from them, so intent were they on making him their king. Then as the moon rises over the Galilean lake, the Lord retires to the solitude and seclusion of the adjoining hill. Alone among the mountains, and yet not alone, he waits for the stars. There, as they come in myriads forth, and hang like trembling lamps from the vaulted roof of night, he worships in the great temple of God. Who will tell his thoughts, as with folded hands he kneels on the green sward and gazes up into heaven ? Perhaps they wander far away to the Black Fortress by the eastern shore of the Dead Sea, where, in his dungeon, the Friend of the Bridegroom had perished. Perhaps they are troubled because his gracious mission to this world has been so gravely misapprehended. Perhaps he is anxious for those Twelve dear ones whom he had to *constrain* to re-embark, lest they should be carried away with the foolish and fatal enthusiasm of the crowd. Perhaps — but why multiply conjec-

tures? Fervent must that prayer have been in the silent watches of the night, under the labouring moon, as the dark clouds scud athwart the midnight sky, and down the wild gorges rush the cold winds from the mountains. Let us worship with him, and, like his first disciples, let us do his bidding, although that bidding should conflict with our own wish and will. And though, like them, we may have storms to encounter, and be sore distressed in rowing ere our home be reached, yet if, like them, we fall not back, he who holds the winds in his fists and the waters in the hollow of his hand will hasten to our help, and meet us on "the other side" in the morning.

VIII.

A NIGHT ON THE HOLY MOUNTAIN.

“For he received from God the Father honour and glory, when there came such a voice to him from the excellent glory, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. And this voice which came from heaven we heard, when we were with him in the holy mount.”—2 PETER i. 17, 18; MATTHEW xvii. 1-9; MARK ix. 2-9; LUKE ix. 28-36; JOHN i. 14.

1.

HIGH up on Hermon's southern slopes may be found many a quiet resting-place, where, “apart by themselves,” devout souls can hold high converse with each other and with heaven. To one of these secluded retreats the Lord Jesus ascends as the sun is sinking to his rest, far to westward, in the uttermost parts of the Great Sea. Behind him climb, steep after steep, those three disciples, who, ere long, must witness a very different scene from that which is just at hand. Having arrived at the high and sacred spot in the bosom of the Holy Mountain, the Lord, in all probability, addresses his followers,

and in language too like that which he afterwards employed at Gethsemane: "Sit ye here, while I go and pray yonder."

Then, withdrawing himself from them as it were a stone's cast, in order to be alone with his Father, the Saviour lifts up his eyes to the beautiful evening sky, and engages in silent prayer.

There for a little let us leave him, while, with Peter, James, and John, we lay us down to rest on the mountain's grassy lap, and ask, Why this excursion to the hills? and why this silent prayer?

2.

Six days had the disciples spent in bewilderment and sorrow. From the lips of their Master they had heard what had almost deprived them of breath. He had told them "that he must go unto Jerusalem, and suffer many things of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be *killed*." We, who live in these days, can form no adequate conception of the consternation that must have seized them, when first, like thunder-clap, these words fell upon their ears. Not the slightest idea had they that it behoved the Messiah to suffer. On the contrary, a

crucified Christ was a stone of stumbling to them, a rock of offence, quite as much as it continued to be to the greater number of the Jewish people after the Lord had ascended to glory. It needed the march of events to prepare them for their Master's humiliation. Stern facts must first strike off the fetters of prejudice, and pass their hard hand over the fair face of other and different expectations. Into what depths of distress, then, must that announcement have plunged them! Six days of unbroken silence! Six days of gloomy stupor! And all this coming immediately after the glorious elevation to which they had just been raised! Only a few days before had the Lord asked the question, "Whom do men say that I the Son of Man am? And they said, Some say that thou art John the Baptist; some, Elias; and others, Jeremias, or one of the prophets. But whom say ye that I am?" responded the Saviour; and Simon Peter, spokesman for his brethren as well as for himself, replied: "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God." "Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-jona!" did the Lord forthwith, with deep emotion, exclaim: "For flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven."

From heights like these to depths like

those had the disciples, in the course of a few days, been precipitated. It was daring, too daring, of Peter; but, all things considered, it was not surprising that he should have taken his Master aside, and rebuked him for speaking of such an ignominious end; whilst the Lord's rejoinder must have only aggravated the situation:—"Do not tempt me to swerve from the grand purpose of my mission to this world. Think not that I can wear the crown, until I shall have endured the cross. And more than this: ye too must take up your cross and follow me, if ye would be my disciples. For whosoever will save his life shall lose it; and whosoever will lose his life for my sake shall find it." So spake the Saviour.

Verily, after utterances like these, the disciples, who were ever dreaming of mere worldly promotion, stood much in need of mountain air and mountain scenery. He who saw it to be necessary to *constrain* them to re-embark, when, by the Galilean lake, they were on the eve of being carried away with the perilous enthusiasm of the five thousand, saw it to be necessary also to rouse them out of the feeling of depression, bordering almost on despair, to which his dark and dismal words had given rise. Hence this excursion to the hills. Here,

on Hermon's bracing heights if anywhere, will they regain their spirits. Far from the world, from strife and tumult, away from scenes where sin and sorrow reign, here with Jesus will be found nothing to offend the eye, to pain the ear, or vex the soul. Here rather the inspiration which a sight of the beautiful and sublime affords; here the magnificence of mountain scenery, where uncontrolled thoughts may be brought back into subjection, and the troubled heart recover composure; here the glories of an Eastern sky, and the heavenly hues of an Oriental sun-set; here the refreshing and reinvigorating dews of Hermon, and above all, and enriching all, the presence of their Lord, dear to them yet as the apple of the eye, the very sun of their soul.

Hence also the Saviour's prayer. Full well he knew how much depended upon these men he was training for the conquest of the world. Many a time, no doubt, in their behalf had he lifted up his eyes to heaven. And now, once more, as he stands on the mountain's breast, whilst they in the distance repose, does he pray for them, albeit in solemn silence. World-embracing prayer! who shall tell it? May it not have been that now, as at the close of his life which was fast approaching, it shaped

itself in some such form as this: "Father, I am praying for *them*: I am not praying for the world, but for them which thou hast given me; for they are thine. And all mine are *thine*, and thine are mine; and I am glorified in them. Holy Father, keep through thine own name those whom thou hast given me, that they may be one as we are. Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word, that they *all* may be one; as thou Father art in me and I in thee, that *they also* may be one in us: that the *world* may believe that thou hast sent me."

As, rapt in holy thought, the Saviour prayed, the rosy hues of evening faded away, and the dusk gave place to darkness. Then sleep, "tired nature's sweet restorer," that nightly sheds her soothing influence over the wearied limbs, and calms the jaded brain, and pours her healing balm into the wounded spirit, came to the three disciples and folded them in her soft embrace. Even so, amid the soothing silence of the hills, as the prayer of the Lord ascends, "he giveth his beloved sleep."

3

About midnight they awoke ; for the glory of the Lord shone round about them. “Where are we ?” so they may have ejaculated. “Is it the morning ? Is it sunrise on the mountains ?” O no ! It is the light of the Master’s countenance, before which, one day, the sun shining in his strength will pale and vanish. It is the brightness of the Father’s glory, and the express image of his person unveiling his celestial beauty. It is the face of Jesus irradiated with Divine splendour. It is the seamless coat, white as the untrodden snow on the heights above. It is their Lord and their God, all but in the body of his glory, ready to ascend, ripe for heaven and eternity.

O the transforming power of true devotion ! The enthusiasm of adoration !—what will this not do even for the material frame ? Here and now are angel faces to be seen, betokening the holy images amid which the soul has taken up abode. What sterling honesty, what saintly purity, what unfaltering truthfulness, what strong affection, yea, what godliness, sparkle in many an eye, and repose on many a cheek ! The loveliness of life’s young day may have

faded and died; but here is the everlasting beauty, the beauty that may be yours and mine, "the beauty of holiness." O! let us learn to live like Jesus. O! let us learn to pray like Jesus. Then like Jesus too, *as we pray*, we shall be transfigured: we shall be "changed into the same image from glory to glory, as by the Spirit of the Lord." And shall we not in due time also, like the first disciples, get a glimpse of the King in his beauty, and behold his glory, "the glory as of the only-begotten of the Father?" Yes, if like them, we are not slow to confess that this same Jesus is both Lord and Christ. "My Lord and my God"—may such be the language of our hearts! Let us adore him in the plain, and he will honour us on the mountain-tops. Let us serve him here, and we shall dwell with him hereafter, and abide in his holy hill.

4

Need we wonder that to a Being so rapt in devotion, and so transfigured in consequence, celestial visitors should appear? Were this world of ours thronged with men like Jesus, earth were heaven, and heaven and earth were

soon blended into one. What separates us from the society of those Holy Ones who have fallen asleep in God, is not so much time or space as character.

Hitherto the form and features of their Blessed Lord had engrossed the enraptured gaze of the disciples; but now they see that he is not alone in his glory. Arrayed in shining robes too, with faces also radiant with light, two strangers, that came not with them up the hill, converse with their Master. Who they are they know not at first; but as the high and holy converse goes on, they perceive that they are Moses and Elijah. Glorious glimpse this of the world beyond the grave! They are not dead, those dear ones, who for a little have left us to fight the battle of life alone. Moses and Elijah, they still live! They, and such as they, still live. Your godly friends, my reader, that fell asleep, some early and some late, they are not dead, they still live. Death did not terminate their existence. Even now are they nearer to you than you can well imagine; and O! how much dearer than when they tabernacled in the flesh. Though years may have fled since last they bade us farewell, they are *ours* yet, they are even *more to us* than they ever were when here below. And

we shall see them again, and our hearts shall rejoice, and our joy shall no man take from us.

“Forgive my grief for one removed,
Thy creature, whom I found so fair.
I trust he lives in thee, and there
I find him worthier to be loved.”

Whilst the *appearance* on the mount with Jesus of these celestial beings yields us this consoling glimpse of the state of the blessed dead, their *conversation* with him is no less suggestive. It turns upon that sublime event to which all the law and the prophets pointed; into which the angels desire to look, and which at that time must have been the subject of all-absorbing interest to every heavenly inhabitant. What those two Shining Ones said to Jesus, and what Jesus said to them, or in what language they spoke one with another concerning the decease about to be accomplished at Jerusalem, we may not understand; but it is worthy of note that Luke represents them speaking of it as an *exodus*. How appropriate such a word on the lips of Elijah, a man who had made *his* exit out of this world without tasting death! What a lesson for him, too! In view of that cross which is about to be erected, he may learn to know a more glorious

way to heaven than in a fiery chariot—the way of self-sacrifice for the glory of God and the good of man. And Moses, too, may learn that there is a grander way out of this world than from the summit of Nebo, by “the kiss of the Eternal.”

Not principally, however, for the instruction of these two Shining Ones did the Lord engage in conversation with them on this momentous theme. Rather was it for the sake of those three enraptured disciples who were looking on and hearkening. To them the Lord, as it were, says: “See how that which has been such a scandal and contradiction to you is understood in heaven. Here are two men from the realms of light, who can talk with me about Calvary and the Cross, and not be offended.”

How long the conference lasted between those two great representatives of the law and the prophets, on the one hand, and Jesus, the crown and consummation of all law and prophecy, on the other, we know not. But we know that it was in answer to his prayer that they were here at all. In the wilderness angels came and ministered to him. In the garden an angel appeared from heaven strengthening him. And now on the holy mount stood Moses and Elias. How this visit from the upper sanc-

tuary must have nerved him for his last journey to Jerusalem, where the great tragedy must be enacted, and the great triumph over sin and death completed! How it must have cheered him on to know, that whilst his own most intimate friends and followers failed to understand what Moses and the prophets had spoken—to wit, that it behoved the Messiah to suffer ere he could enter into his glory—Moses and the prophets themselves understood all, and sympathised with all; that although here below he must tread the wine-press alone, and of the people there be none with him, yet above, beyond the stars, all were profoundly interested in the decease to be accomplished at Jerusalem. But chiefly for the sake of the disciples did these two men appear in their glory, to talk with the Saviour about his approaching departure; and by and by the disciples will understand this object of their mysterious visit, though not now. It was too grand, too glorious, that night-scene among the mountains, to be apprehended at once in its full spiritual import. Nor need we wonder that the impetuous apostle should have exclaimed, as the heavenly visitors were on the eve of returning to the abodes of the blessed: “Lord, they need not depart. It is well that we thy servants are here. Here let us con-

struct a shelter for the night—three tents on this mountain-side—one for thee, and one for Moses, and one for Elias.”

Bewildered man! He knew not what he was saying. Did he think that the glorified “man of God,” and the illustrious prophet of Jehovah, were afraid of the night air of this nether world? Verily, he wist not what he said. When, however, he penned his second epistle, he knew full well what he was saying. Then, when he was an old man about to go the way of all the earth, the mention of his own *decease*, and the putting off of his own earthly *tabernacle*, carried him away back in thought to that wondrous night with Jesus on the mountain, when the *decease* to be accomplished at Jerusalem was the all-absorbing theme of converse, and when, confused with sleep and the splendours of the midnight scene, he said, “Let us build here three *tabernacles*.” Yes, when he penned that epistle he knew what he was saying, and he knew that he was referring to no cunningly devised fable, no dream, no illusion, but a veritable sight of veritable men, a real spectacle of transcendent splendour. O, when *we* think of it, *we* wist not what to say. The language of earth must be left behind, when, with Peter or with Paul, we are caught up into Paradise, and enter into

communion with those who dwell in the higher heavens. But let us not stumble at this—

“Nor think though men were none,
That heaven should want spectators, God want praise.
Millions of spiritual creatures walk the earth,
Unseen, both when we wake and when we sleep.”

5.

Over the mountain top came a bright cloud—bright, not only with the reflected glory of the Blessed Ones, but bearing a glory of its own, even that same glory which came down on Sinai, the glory which appeared between the cherubims, the glory of Jehovah himself. How dreadful is this place! no doubt whispered the awe-struck disciples. This is none other than the house of God, this is the gate of heaven! Did their Saviour not look at them, and say, “Be not afraid, only hearken. Not now as on Sinai’s summit does this cloud descend. Not now are ye come unto the mount that might be touched, and that burned with fire, nor unto blackness, and darkness, and tempest, and the sound of a trumpet, and the voice of words, a voice which they that heard entreated that it should not be spoken to them any more. No. But ye are come unto Mount Sion, and unto the

city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly and church of the first-born, which are written in heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect." A reassuring look at least from their Master spoke to the three disciples thus, as they exceedingly feared and quaked. Then from out that mysterious cloud, from behind that wondrous veil in which God invests himself when he appears upon the earth, fell that voice divine in which this august midnight spectacle culminates, "THIS IS MY BELOVED SON: HEAR HIM."

Momentous admonition! worthy of the whole of this transcendent scene upon the Holy Mountain! "Hear HIM," saith the Lord God Almighty, "The end of the law is come. It is now the fulness of time. Till the heavens be no more, this is my last, clearest, and fullest word to the world.

"HEAR Him, for he is truly what ye have confessed him to be—the Christ, the Son of the living God. Hear him, and do not rebuke him when he speaks to you again of the decease to be accomplished at Jerusalem. Hear him, for he is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth. Hear him when he

bids you take up your cross and follow him ; to whatever he may say to you give earnest heed, lest at any time you should let it slip ; wherever he may lead you, follow."

Having uttered his voice, a voice to which we in these days would do well to give ear—for the centuries that have come and gone since then have only served to confirm it as a true, divine, God-given voice—having spoken thus, the night passed away, and day broke upon the mountains. Then, like the angel by the brook Jabbok, did God seem to say, "Let me go, for the day breaketh." Then rose that Shechinah-cloud, and vanished in the clear morning sky. And with it Moses and Elias, too, disappeared, and Jesus was left alone.

Alone! And yet not alone. "Come, my disciples," he as it were says, "let me touch you one by one ; arise, and be not afraid. I have many things to say unto you about this night on the hill, but ye cannot bear them now ; what ye know not now, however, ye shall know hereafter. Meanwhile keep the vision secret. After I have returned to the Father, then will it be time to make it known. Then will they not be able to make me a king of this world. Then will ye, too, understand what my real kingdom is, and how alone that kingdom can be

secured." Thus the Lord Jesus veils his glory. Like the morning light, which, though it comes so noiselessly and imperceptibly, nevertheless transfigures the face of the earth and sets in motion all the wheels of nature; even so must "the excellent glory" break upon the world. "Speak not of it now," saith the Lord, as with his disciples he descends the hill, going forth unto his work again and to his labour, until the evening, in the plain below. "Keep silent. Not like lightning's flash let the vision go forth; rather like that sun, now up, let it rise upon the hearts and homes of men: first the gray dawn, then the clear light, then the rising into broader, brighter brilliance, till the perfect day. Let it steal its way thus to cheer and to gladden; to fill the fearful with hope, and the doubting with peace, and all men everywhere with the deep conviction that there is a better world beyond the clouds, and beyond the tomb—the home of the Hebrew prophet, the home of the Jewish law-giver, the home soon to be mine, soon also to be yours, the destined home of all who will do as I bid them, and take up their cross, and follow me."

IX.

THE SHADOW OF DEATH.

“And they were in the way going up to Jerusalem; and Jesus was going before them; and they were amazed, and, as they followed, they were afraid.”—MARK X. 32.

1.

IN THE SHADOW.

FAR ahead of his followers, the Saviour, for the last time, holds on his journey to Jerusalem. The firm footstep, the speed, the erect and dignified bearing with which he travels, are all those of a man whose nerves are tensely strung. His features, too, are *set*. His face is as a flint. Those gracious lips, now firmly closed, betoken a resolute purpose. From out those heavenly eyes flashes heroic determination to compass the awful end. The LAMB of God, which taketh away the sin of the world, is now the LION of the Tribe of Judah.

As, in the distance, the disciples follow and gaze after their Lord, they are struck with amazement. "Surely," they seem to whisper, "something more than usual troubles the Master to-day." The decease to be accomplished at Jerusalem they understand not yet. No wonder. The cross of Christ was not to be understood until it had been erected. Not until the Son of Man had been lifted up were the need and the meaning of the sufferings of Immanuel to be apprehended by men. Marvel not, reader, at the amazement of the Twelve. They could not see Jesus going up in the shadow of the cross to make an atonement for the sins of the world. They could only see him marching right into the jaws of ignominious death. "Master," they, as it were, cry after him, anticipating all, "the Jews of late sought to stone thee, and goest thou thither again?"

Nor were they without fear for themselves. They knew that, as faithful disciples, it was their duty to follow him whithersoever he might lead. They shrank, and naturally shrank, from going after him to prison and to death. Great, that day, was their terror. But the time was not far distant when he who was then going before them would make the crooked places straight, and the rough places plain, and then

would they rejoice to be counted worthy to suffer shame for his name. Yet a very little while and eleven of those terror-stricken men we shall see holding each on his way, as the Master now holds upon his, animated with their Master's spirit—the spirit of self-sacrifice—resolved to lay down their lives, if need be, for the world's welfare and the glory of God. But O how easy their way as compared with his! Now treads he the wine-press alone, and of the people there is none with him. In all its terrible details he sees it all before him. He stops on the onward march, he waits till the disciples come up; and then, taking them aside from the other groups that are also going to keep the passover, he relates "what things should happen unto him, saying, Behold, we go up to Jerusalem; and the Son of Man shall be delivered unto the chief priests, and unto the scribes, and they shall condemn him to death, and shall deliver him to the Gentiles; and they shall mock him, and shall scourge him, and shall spit upon him, and shall kill him."

Full before him, too, hangs that dark cloud which no human eye has ever yet been able to penetrate—that cloud which descended on his soul as, suspended on the accursed tree, he expiated a world's guilt, satisfied Divine justice,

and reconciled man to God—that cloud which, as it gathered into blacker folds, and for the moment shut out in impenetrable darkness the light of light, the light of his own Father's face, wrung from him the loud and lamentable cry—"My God! my God! why hast *Thou* forsaken me?"

Was ever shadow of death like that? With the silent stars over our heads, and underneath our feet the silent graves, unwittingly pursue we our journey towards the goal of all mortal. We know not what an hour may to our fate betide. It is well. Were we to see beforehand what ere long we should become—care-encumbered men, each bearing his burden of sorrow; disheartened, broken-down, youth's buoyant spirit fled, the hale and hearty laugh of life's young day silenced, and for ever—who, O God, would be able to stand? In thy mercy the future hides in it both the good hap and the sorrow; therefore, undaunted, we press still onwards.

But we see Jesus, in the full knowledge of all that was going to transpire, holding nevertheless on his way to Jerusalem. Marvel not, my reader, that it required a stupendous effort, even on the part of Christ, to pass through an ordeal like that. Oh! it must have been with

a sigh of infinite relief that he cried out at last—"It is finished," and yielded up the spirit and died. The prospect, with men like Jesus, is ever more agonizing than the reality. His was a soul that was cast in the finest mould: his a sensitiveness, a sensibility, of which unfeeling, stoical, soulless men can form no conception; of which the purest, and truest, and tenderest-hearted even of *womankind* can have only the faintest glimmering. The mere *sighing* of the needy caught his compassionate ear. The faintest wail of distress moved him to help and to heal. The very breath of suspicion touched him to the quick. The simple appearance of evil made him shudder and quake. Oh! what must it have been for a being like that to march wittingly and so feelingly towards Jerusalem, where he was to be shamefully handled, delivered over to the *Gentiles*, condemned as a blasphemer, and put to a death reserved only for slaves and the worst of criminals? What for such a being must it have been to go up to that unholy city, bearing on his breast a world's guilt and a world's woe, bearing them up even to the cross and on the cross, and there as our great and gracious substitute, to bow his head and, as if God-deserted, to die?

“Strong Son of God,” shall we not with the poet exclaim? “Behold,” says Paul also, “I now go bound in the spirit unto Jerusalem, not knowing the things that shall befall me there: save that the Holy Ghost witnesseth in every city, saying, that bonds and afflictions abide me. But none of these things move me; neither count I my life dear unto me, so that I might finish my course with joy, and the ministry which I have received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the gospel of the grace of God.”

As Germany's Great Reformer pursued *his* journey to the place which was to him what Jerusalem was to Paul, a great crowd flocked around him. Ah! said some, there are so many bishops and cardinals at Worms—they will burn you, and reduce your body to ashes, as they did with John Huss. But nothing frightened Luther. “Though they should kindle a fire,” said he, “all the way from Worms to Wittemberg, the flames of which reached to heaven, I would walk through it in the name of the Lord.”

Nor was this a mere boast. Over the grave of that great and good man might have been uttered the words that were spoken at the tomb of one equally good, and equally great—*“There lies one that never feared the face of man.”*

Nevertheless, when we have given to all these heroes of history—to Paul, to Luther, and to Knox—their due, how much of their fortitude may have been owing to the fact that they “knew not the things that should befall them there?” Ignorance makes heroes of us all. In life, and—shall we not also say in death?—no small share of any little courage we may display, is largely owing to the haze that hangs over the ultimate issues.

But we see Jesus travelling *alone* in the greatness of his might: alone in the unenviable foreknowledge of all that was about to take place—the gulf that yawned for him, the fire that burned for him; alone in keenest sensibility, with no stoical philosophy to nerve or support him; alive, as no mere man can ever be, to the sense of shame, and injustice, and unkindness; alone in that deep mysterious woe that wrung his soul as he tasted death for every man.

Nor was he goaded on, as we oftentimes are, by the sharp spur of necessity. The inspiration that gave wings to his sacred feet, and caused him *stedfastly* to *set* his face to go to Jerusalem, was not the inspiration of desperation. He went up in the fulness of his LIBERTY, as well as in the fulness of his con-

sciousness and sensibility. He could have retraced his steps had he been so disposed. He could have fled, had he willed. All power in heaven and earth was his. "I lay down my life," he says; "no man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself." He *gave* his life a ransom for many. He elected to suffer. He chose to die.

O! it is when we thus recall to mind what our Lord had to encounter in going up for the last time to Jerusalem; it is when we duly consider that he *knew* it all, *felt* it all, as no mere man can ever know or feel; and that, notwithstanding, he swerved not aside, but, in the *freedom of his own glorious and gracious purpose*, held unflinchingly on—it is only then we can in any measure appreciate the force of his lofty determination, of his—what shall we call it?—so high and lifted up was it above all that is heroic in man. Even so did our Blessed Redeemer walk through the valley of the shadow of death.

2.

ABOVE THE SHADOW.

Rapt into future times, the Hebrew prophet, awe-struck, also gazed on the world's Redeemer as he held on his victorious career, and exclaimed :—

“Who is this that cometh from Edom, with dyed garments from Bozrah? this that is glorious in his apparel, travelling in the greatness of his strength?” and was answered, “I that speak in righteousness, mighty to save.”

“Wherefore,” rejoins the prophet, “art thou *red* in thine apparel, and thy garments like him that treadeth in the winefat?” Answer : “I have trodden the wine-press alone ; and of the people there was none with me : for I will tread them in mine anger, and trample them in my fury ; and their blood shall be sprinkled upon my garments, and I will stain all my raiment. For the day of vengeance is in mine heart, and the year of my redeemed is come. And I looked, and there was none to help ; and I wondered that there was none to uphold : therefore mine own arm brought salvation unto me, and my fury it upheld me.”

Ah ! this it was which that day nerved the Saviour for Calvary and the cross—his love for the souls of men. The year of his Redeemed had come, and he cried, as he travelled in the greatness of the might of that love and that pity, “Save now from going down to the pit : here comes the ransom.”

LOVE ! what has it not done ? LOVE ! what will it not do ? Answer, ye mothers, who have taken up the burden of a fatherless family, and carried it, and cheerfully carried it, year after year, through summer and winter, through cold and through wet, in hunger and hardship, in sickness and sorrow and death. Answer, ye fathers, who day after day, and month after month, have hoped against hope, waiting and watching, and weeping and praying for the return of the prodigal child. Answer us, Paul, and tell us how love nerved *thine* arm and expanded *thy* soul, *that* love thou didst bear to thy Master :—

“Of the Jews five times received I forty stripes save one, thrice was I beaten with rods, once was I stoned, thrice I suffered shipwreck, a night and a day I have been in the deep ; in journeyings often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils by mine own countrymen, in perils by the heathen, in perils in the

city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren; in weariness and painfulness, in watchings often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness." And, as if these were not enough to show what love can do, he adds—"That which cometh upon me daily, the care of all the churches."

O, the omnipotence of love! But what must that love have been that could inspire love like this? What that mighty heart that created the heart of father and mother? What that Divine flame that can kindle such a fire within the human breast? It passeth knowledge. And such was the love of Christ. Many waters could not quench it, nor floods drown it. It was stronger than death. Travelling in the greatness of its strength, he surmounted every obstacle, triumphed over every hindrance, bore himself forward in all its majesty and might towards the cross, and in such heroic fashion as to fill his followers with wonder.

And we are left to wonder still; not, indeed, *now*, that he should have died in our stead and in our behalf, but that the love which made him strong to do this should ever have been awakened within his bosom. "For scarcely for a righteous man will one die; yet, peradventure,

for a good man some would even dare to die ; but God commendeth his love toward us in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." Yes, this is something still left us at which to marvel—"the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge."

Let us muse on this measureless love till the fire burns within our own bosoms, and we speak with our tongue: "I will mention the loving-kindnesses of the Lord, and the praises of the Lord, according to all that the Lord hath bestowed on us, and the great goodness toward the house of Israel which he hath bestowed on them according to his mercies, and according to the multitude of his loving-kindnesses. For he said, Surely they are my people, children that will not lie, so he was their SAVIOUR."

For the love he bore his Father, too, did the Saviour, that day, set his face to go to Jerusalem. He looked back to the time when the sublime purpose to save a lost and ruined world was formed in the bosom of the Eternal ; to the day when he volunteered to carry out that great and gracious purpose ; to that supreme hour in the world's chronology when the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us ; and when that Word, in the spirit of true filial obedience, addressed the All-merciful Father thus, "Lo,

I come : in the volume of the book it is written of me, I delight to do thy will, O my God ; yea, thy law is within my heart." And as he went up for the last time to Jerusalem, may we not hear him saying once more : " My meat is to do the will of him that sent me, and to finish his work."

A deep and abiding sense of duty — what will this, also, not do for man ? Is this not one grand secret, even yet, of power ? Would you, my reader, be strong to walk like your Saviour through the valley of the shadow of death ? let the filial heart of the Saviour be yours. The disciples marvelled at him as he strode along the mountain-track. Had they known what a loving, dutiful, obedient Son he was, their amazement would have given place to admiration. O ! was it not because he was *such* a SON that he has been, is, and ever will be such a SAVIOUR—mighty to save to the uttermost all that come unto God through him. " The cup which my Father hath given me to drink, shall I not drink it ? " O how these words light up the dark shadow ! How that spirit of obedience, obedience even unto death, *even* the death of the cross, lifted the Saviour above that dark shadow, and bore him triumphantly onwards ! O that such spirit

were ours ! Whatever the path of suffering may be that God has marked out for us to walk in, may we be enabled from our hearts, with the Lord Jesus, to say, "Not my will, but Thine be done."

We have gone backwards, but we might have gone forwards. For the joy that was set before him, too, did he endure the cross, despising the shame. For the hour which was now at hand, which should welcome him back to the glory which he had with the Father before the world was ; for the song of triumph with which the angels ere long would make heaven's high arches ring—"Lift up your heads, O ye gates, and be ye lifted up, ye everlasting doors, and the King of glory shall come in ;" for the great last day when he would see of the travail of his soul and be satisfied ; for the marriage-supper of the Lamb, at which would sit down all his Redeemed out of every country and time ; for that great and glorious future, also, did the Saviour that day set his face as a flint to go up to Jerusalem.

O ! what will our own raptures be, when we gaze at last upon that Eternal home, and sit down at the feast, and see of the travail of our own souls and are satisfied. Transcendently glorious that house of many mansions ! that house not made with hands, eternal in

the heavens ! Mortal eye cannot picture a world so fair, nor can the most glowing imagination rise to its conception. Language fails when it tries to describe "the far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory." All the most precious things of earth we may heap upon each other in bewildering grandeur and profusion, and even then will our conception of that state of Christ's Redeemed ones be but faint and feeble. The walls of Zion ! The foundations of Zion ! The streets of Zion ! The gates of Zion ! Begone all attempts at description ! That city has no need of the sun, neither of the moon to shine in it ; for the glory of God doth lighten it, and the LAMB is the light thereof. No storm, no tempest, will raise their voices there ; no more shadows of death to awaken the despondent sigh or call forth the bitter tear ; no wail of sorrow, no sob of grief, no cry of anguish, no more *setting of the face* for the fiery ordeals of earth ; but for ever, and for evermore, the harmony of the spheres, and the higher harmony of thousands, and thousands of thousands whose hearts are one, and the far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory.

The joy that was set before him ! O what must *his* joy be, if *ours* is to be so great ?

What ineffable blessedness his, as he gazes on this transcendently glorious sight, and hearkens to the songs of praise like the voice of many waters — “Unto Him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father; to Him be glory and dominion for ever and ever.” What blessedness his as he gazes on all this, and hearkens to all this, and then lifts up his eyes to the Great Father of all and says: “Father, Behold me now, and these children whom thou hast given me!”

It was Paul who said it, but the Saviour might have said it too, as he journeyed that day to Jerusalem, to Calvary, to the cross, and to the grave: “I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed.” Animated as Christ was, we, too, may prosecute our journey through life and in suffering, nor turn to the right hand nor left, nor repine. With the *spirit of obedience* that fired *his* bosom; with the *heart of love* that throbbed in *his* breast; with the *glorious prospect* that loomed both on *his* near and far-off horizons, we too shall set our face as a flint and go forward.

X.

ON THE WAY TO EMMAUS.

“Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into his glory?”—LUKE xxiv. 26.

“They thought him, and they justly thought him, one
Sent to do more than he appeared to have done ;
To exalt a people, and to place them high
Above all else, and wondered he should die.”

IT was the first day of a new week, and, we may say, of a new era. The purple shadows of the afternoon were falling on the distant hills, as two bosom friends left Jerusalem to go to Emmaus. The name of the one was Cleopas, that of the other is unknown ; but they were disciples both of the Lord Jesus Christ, whose faith in him as the Messiah had been sorely shaken by the Crucifixion. As they pursued their journey “o’er moor and fen, o’er crag and torrent,” they discussed in a quiet and friendly way the sad event, along with all the things in connection therewith that had since then happened.

How rich their theme of converse ! For over eighteen hundred years men have been telling to the world that story, which was then in its infancy, and without exhausting either it or the world.

“Gentlemen,” said a celebrated philosopher at a gathering of the most renowned infidels of the age, “I know no men in France, or elsewhere, who can speak or write with more talent or art. Nevertheless, in spite of all the evil we have spoken, I defy you with all your power to compose a narrative which shall be as simple, but at the same time as sublime and as touching, as the recital of the passion and death of Jesus Christ—which shall produce the same effect and make so strong a sensation, felt so generally by all, and the influence of which shall continue the same after so many ages.”

And such was the grand subject which engaged our two fellow-travellers in solemn conversation on the Emmaus road eighteen centuries ago.

“Well, brother,” I can hear one to the other say, “there can be no doubt that Jesus of Nazareth was a *good man*. We, who knew him best, can truly say, that he was holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners. He

did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth: when he was reviled, he reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not; but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously. And we can also say that he was a *great prophet*, too. What gracious words fell from his lips! What mighty works he did! Nor did he speak in secret, nor work in a corner; but in the presence of all the people did he show that he had ‘the finger of God’ and the ‘tongue of the learned,’ and knew how to speak a word in season to the weary and heavy-laden.”

“True, Cleopas, and yet they *hanged* him on the accursed tree. Oh the shame of that cross! How ignominious that end! What a black cloud for the Sun of Righteousness to go down under! He was numbered with the transgressors; and just as if he had been the greatest transgressor of the three, they crucified him ‘in the midst.’

“But what say you, brother, to the rumour that was set afloat this morning? The grave of our Lord *empty*! A vision of angels, arrayed in white robes and sitting, the one at the head, and the other at the feet, where the body of Jesus had lain! Our sisters, informed by those angels in the grey dawn of the morning

that he was ALIVE! Can it be possible? Who ever yet heard of such a thing? And yet we cannot forget that it was current among the Master's most intimate disciples, how he spoke to them once and again about 'a rising from the dead,' and how they pondered what the rising from the dead could mean.

"Verily, an astonishing rumour, Cleopas; but, as you say, *him* they *saw* not." Thus conversing, the two disciples moved on.

It is far from easy to picture to ourselves the very peculiar state of mind in which they must have been, in the midst of events so astonishing. How difficult for us even to-day, to grasp the idea of a resurrection from the dead! How much more difficult for them! And yet it would seem as if their spirits were hovering over the border-land of that idea. It was beginning to dawn upon their minds like the first streaks of morning after a dark and troubled night. When years had come and gone, they would be able to look back to this afternoon's walk to Emmaus, and say as those Jewish exiles in Babylon said when first they heard that they were to be restored to their own country:—

"As men that dreamed were we."

But even as after some cheering vision of the night we sometimes awake to the recollection of something that has happened to cause us infinite pain, so those two disciples awoke from their reverie to the remembrance of the cross and its shame. Sore stunned were their hearts when they thought of it. However good, however great, Jesus of Nazareth may have been; whatever rumours of his resurrection may be afloat in the air—all must go for little against the stupendous fact of his ignominious death. Whatever he may have been, he cannot have been the Messiah promised to their fathers. That the Messiah should *so* die, impossible!

Thus, with a terrible sense of desolation and disappointment portrayed on every feature, those two friends of Jesus held on their way.

Then overtook them one whom they knew not; but who knew them, and went with them. Unseasonable interruption! no doubt thought the disciples. Beautiful illustration rather, say we, of that gracious promise, "Where two or three are gathered together in my name there am I in the midst of them." Ignorant intruder! perhaps murmured the disciples, as he asked what it was they disputed by the way; seeing that in those days there

was only one subject of conversation. Sympathetic stranger rather! may we retort as we behold him marking with pitiful eye the sadness of their countenances, and with a gracious purpose putting his question.

“What manner of communications!” thus Cleopas exclaims. “Art thou only a sojourner in Jerusalem for the passover-week? And hast thou been lodging alone, and therefore ignorant of the things that have come to pass there in these days?”

“What things?” Mysterious traveller on the world’s high-way! who should know better than thou thyself those things? thou who didst erewhile predict them, saying, Behold we must go up to Jerusalem, and suffer many things of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed; thou who hadst endured all, and hadst, concerning all, cried with a loud voice, “it is finished!”

“What things?” however, the stranger inquires, not for information, but because, ignorant though he may appear, he has something to say on the all-absorbing topic of the hour, which it will be good for those two men to hear. And so they reply—“the things concerning Jesus of Nazareth. Never man spake like him. A prophet verily he was, mighty

in deed, mighty in word. His was the power of God, his the spirit of God. As the Messiah of promise we had come to regard him; as such we had come even to adore him. To him we were trusting for deliverance from all our enemies. We had hoped that he it was who should have taken the reins of government, and ushered in the glory of Messiah's kingdom—that glory so glowingly depicted in our sacred records: 'In his days shall the righteous flourish; and abundance of peace so long as the moon endureth. He shall have dominion also from sea to sea, and from the river unto the ends of the earth. They that dwell in the wilderness shall bow before him; and his enemies shall lick the dust. The kings of Tarshish and of the isles shall bring presents: the kings of Sheba and Seba shall offer gifts. Yea, all kings shall fall down before him; all nations shall serve him.' But, alas! the name of Jesus of Nazareth is eclipsed. Our ecclesiastics delivered him to the Gentiles, and they have put him to death, *even* the death of the cross. He has gone from us, and all our long-cherished hopes and all our glorious expectations lie buried in his grave. And yet—we know not what to think—that grave, we have this morning been told by those who were so

informed, is empty. Angels have been seen in the holy sepulchre. Angels have spoken, and said that he was ALIVE."

What must Jesus of Nazareth have thought as he was once more passing by, to hear those two men, first one and then the other, speaking in some such way as this concerning the things that had come to pass in Jerusalem in those days? How gratifying to find that that Blessed Name which had suffered such apparent eclipse was a name yet revered, and confessed. O! like these two disciples, let us act up to the light we have, and we shall get more light. Nor let us be angry with those who cannot go all the way with us in regard to the person of the Saviour; let them only hold firmly and conscientiously the belief that he was at least a really good man, and a great prophet, and sooner or later will they find themselves constrained to admit that he was something more than either—the very Messiah of Old Testament promise, the seed of the woman who should bruise the head of the serpent, the Desire of all nations, the Shiloh of Genesis, the Wonder of Isaiah, the Christ of the Gospels, and the Alpha and Omega of the Apocalypse.

"O fools and slow of heart to believe."

Thus at length the stranger replied: "Yours is the ignorance — yours the dull spiritual perception! Search the Scriptures and see what the prophets have spoken in regard to Messiah. Have they not testified beforehand that he should suffer and die, ere he could enter into his glory? Hearken:—'He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth: he is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he openeth not his mouth. He was taken from prison and from judgment, and who shall declare his generation? for he was cut off out of the land of the living: for the transgression of my people was he stricken. And he made his grave with the wicked, and with the rich in his death; because he had done no violence, neither was any deceit in his mouth. Yet it pleased the Lord to bruise him; he hath put him to grief: when thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin, he shall see his seed, he shall prolong his days, and the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in his hand. He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied.' 'Of whom, ye bewildered men, speaketh the prophet this? of himself, or of some other man? Doubtless of some other man, and that man—?"

O to have heard that mysterious stranger, so well versed in Old Testament scriptures, talking to those two disciples by the way, beginning at Moses, travelling over the sacred volume, expounding, opening up hidden meanings of type and symbol and sacrifice, unfolding promise and prophecy, pointing out the idea running all through the Word and down through the ages of a suffering Messiah, and marking the development of that idea until it had clothed itself in flesh and blood, and culminated in Calvary's cross! Need we wonder, as he thus took down lamp after lamp from out the temple of the Old Testament, and hung them up in the dark and sorrowful places of those disciples' souls, that their hearts should have burned within them, and that or ever they were aware they were approaching the village whither they went?

Then their fellow-traveller who had proved himself to be at least a Rabbi far ahead of the teachers of the day, not unlike their old Master, who oftentimes took advantage of their disputations, as this stranger had done, in order to convey instruction, and who had ever an eye to detect the first symptoms of sadness, and a heart ever ready to sympathise with the sorrowful—then he, that mysterious One, in many

respects so Christ-like, made as though he would have gone further. Nor was this a mere feint. He would doubtless have continued his journey had he been permitted. But he had proved himself a companion too precious to be thus let go—not to speak of the lack of courtesy, and hospitality, and gratitude, which such an action on the part of those disciples would have displayed. But they had been trained in a different school. They had found by the way one who was well-disposed to their crucified Lord, probably a disciple, though secretly; and they remembered doubtless the words of their Master: “He that receiveth a prophet in the name of a prophet shall receive a prophet’s reward; and he that receiveth a righteous man in the name of a righteous man shall receive a righteous man’s reward. And whosoever shall give to drink unto one of these little ones a cup of cold water only in the name of a disciple, verily I say unto you, he shall in no wise lose his reward.” And so they said—their former brusqueness of manner changed for that of profound respectfulness, and even affection—such a wonderful influence had this man’s words and bearing produced on their minds and hearts, “Thou shalt go no farther to-

night : abide with us, for it is toward evening, and the day is far spent." Then, as the sun went down, he yielded to their loving constraints, and as one that turneth aside to tarry for a night, he went in with them, and the door was shut.

It was our Sabbath evening, the first of the series. Many such Sabbath evenings have there been since then, and many such may there be ! O that men, in these restless days of ours, would learn to appreciate more the sanctity of their own firesides at all times, but especially when the quiet and peaceful hours of the evening of the Lord's day come round ! Here, if anywhere on earth, are to be had sweet foretastes of our heavenly home—here, the doors being shut, the busy world with all its fretting cares and clamorous tongues shut out ; shut in with those who know and love us best, with those who many a mile have walked with us along the way of life, sharing our sorrows and our joys ; with Him too, whom though unseen, we love, in whom, though now we see him not, yet believing we shall ere long rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory.

Who will tell what other gracious words proceeded out of his mouth, or what loving glances were his, as they awaited the evening

meal? Sweet time! Glad time! What peace! What holy calm! Affecting reminder—this cottage scene at Emmaus—of evening hours at Bethany, with Martha, and Mary, and Lazarus, and the Twelve! So that stranger may have thought. Then, like him who hallowed with his presence that humble home only some eight days before, “the Wonderful,” as a transition probably to the revelation which he was about to make, assumed the place of honour, as the father of the family. “And it came to pass as he sat at meat with them, he took bread, and blessed it, and brake it, and gave to them.” Did they see the print of the nails in those hands that took the bread? Was there anything suggestive of the old familiar voice as he invoked the blessing on the evening meal? The breaking of the bread, and the gracious way in which he gave it to the disciples when broken—was there anything characteristic about these? We know not. But we know that the eyes hitherto holden were opened. He who up till now had addressed himself to the ear and the understanding, now revealed himself to the eye and the soul. Having proved out of the Old Testament Scriptures that it behoved the Messiah to suffer, he gave them at length a glimpse of the

glory into which the Messiah had entered ; and vanished out of their sight. It was the Lord himself ; and as he became instantaneously invisible, did he not seem to repeat to the highly favoured two the words which that morning he had addressed to Mary by the tomb—"Touch me not ; for I am not yet ascended to my Father : but go to my brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto my Father and your Father, and to my God and your God ?"

And to the Lord's brethren and theirs with joyful hearts they went. Rising up that same hour, they returned to Jerusalem, nor thought the way long nor dreary. Did not their hearts burn within them as their unknown friend talked with them by the way, and opened to them the Scriptures ? How much more must their hearts have burned within them now ! now that the great stumbling-block was no longer in their way ; now that they had learned, albeit contrary to all their previous training in Jewish schools and previous expectations, that it behoved the Messiah to suffer and to enter into his glory ; that even their own prophets had testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ and the glory that should follow. No, the way back to the Holy City would not seem

long with this grand truth as the theme of converse now—NO CROSS, NO CROWN! And this, not only for Messiah, but for all who would follow in Messiah's footsteps! They, too, had suffered with the sufferings of their Lord; they, too, now enter into the joy of their Lord. The Lord is risen indeed! risen indeed! And they told the Eleven, and them that were with them, what things were done in the way, and how he was known of them in breaking of bread.

It is a beautiful story, and wonderful. Nor would we mar its beauty by detailing the many lessons which it might teach, or the many suggestions which crowd into the mind as we read it; nor would we interfere with the sense of wonder which it is so well fitted to excite. Only this one lesson we must not omit to mention, to repeat—the lesson of all lessons, the central subject of all Christ's own teachings, the secret of his cross, the inscrutable mystery even of the universe—that the way to glory for one and for all is the way of suffering, that "every noble crown is, and on earth will forever be, a crown of thorns."

Be brave, however, my reader. It is but a very little while, and all will be over. Then shall we find those sayings true: "Weeping

may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning ;” “ If we suffer with him, we shall also reign with him ;” “ If so be that we suffer with him, we shall be also glorified together.” And just in proportion as we are able to partake of the sufferings of Christ, shall we partake of his glory. O that we could say, As Christ was, so are we in this world ; then also might we add—as Christ now is, so also shall we be in the world to come, when, having walked with him all the day long, we vanish with him in the evening into the unseen and the eternal.

XI.

AS LITTLE CHILDREN.

“ At the same time came the disciples unto Jesus, saying, Who is greatest in the kingdom of heaven? And Jesus called a little child unto him, and set him in the midst of them, and said, Verily, I say unto you, Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven.”—MAT. xviii. 1-3.; MARK ix. 33-37; LUKE ix. 46-48.

HAVING visited Mount Hermon and the springs of the Jordan, the Lord and the Twelve are on their way home to Capernaum. With the exception of the Master they are all in higher spirits for their excursion to the hills. No beautiful scenery, no bracing air of the mountains, can lift from off his heart the burden which it bears. And so, on the way back, he repeats the announcement which, but a few days before, had cast the disciples into sore distress: “The Son of Man is delivered into the hands of men, and they shall kill him.”

But the Twelve are no longer in the mood for hearkening to the story of the Cross; and like men who tremble at the thought of sum-

moning spirits from the deep, they are afraid to ask him. "Banish all dark forebodings," the now buoyant disciples seem to say, "and let us muse on something else."

"What say you, John, to these glorious words of the Master to which he recently gave utterance, 'Verily I say unto you, That there be some of them that stand here which shall not taste of death till they have seen the kingdom of God come with power?' Surely the day, to which we have so long been looking forward, cannot now be very far off. O! what great men we shall all be when the kingdom comes."

To which John may be supposed to reply:—"Peter, ever since the moment our Blessed Lord spake those words, I have been wondering how he will distribute the chief offices of state. Which of us, think you, will sit on his right hand, and which on his left, in his glory? Will Judas be retained as Chancellor of the Exchequer? There can be no doubt of this, at least, that up till now my brother James, and you, and I, have been particularly favoured by the Master."

"Indeed"—some one of the remaining nine may be supposed with warmth to exclaim—"it does look as if in the approaching kingdom

there were to be no little favouritism : it does seem as if we nine were to be left in the background. What could the Master mean when he said to you, Peter, ‘And I say unto thee, that thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church : and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven : and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth, shall be bound in heaven ; and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth, shall be loosed in heaven ?’ And why, Peter, James, and John, were ye the only three who were taken up into the mount, whilst we were left behind to be baffled and affronted in the plain ?”

Let it not be thought that we take too great liberty with the sacred records in so representing the conversation of the disciples. We have no doubt whatever that it was even more serious than this—that words of greater warmth were spoken, and that the tones and gestures were such as greatly to pain the Prince of peace, already over-burdened with sorrow. Let us remember that the disciples were men subject to like passions as we are—to like envyings, jealousies, and ambitions ; and let us not forget that we are distinctly told that the subject of precedence in the coming kingdom was matter

of serious disputation and strife. Self-seeking ! self-glorification ! to what wars and fightings since have not these, on all hands, given rise ? ‘Grudge not one against another, brethren, lest ye be condemned. Behold the Judge standeth before the door.’

The Lord Jesus was cognisant of all that had transpired by the way. Not, however, until their burning passions had somewhat subsided, and he had got them all safely back to Capernaum, did he ask, ‘What was it that ye disputed among yourselves by the way ?’ Well, of course, he knew, albeit it was not improbable that, even after their return, the traces of contention might still be read upon their countenances.

Thus questioned, however, the disciples were silent for shame. More eloquent than words was that silence. Well for them that they had a Master who could interpret aright those downcast looks and those sealed lips, nor aggravate their humiliation. Faithful, nevertheless, he must be. Now will he explain to them the real character of the kingdom which he has come to set up in the world. Now will he show them in what greatness in this kingdom consists. Now will he warn them against that spirit of vain-glory which, if retained or in-

dulged, will not merely keep them from becoming great in the kingdom, but will exclude them from the kingdom altogether.

2.

“My kingdom,” the Lord, as it were, says, “is not of this world. Not so many square miles, not so many broad acres, constitute my territory. Neither have I come to sway men after the manner of a mere earthly potentate. True, the authority which I shall one day wield will extend to all that a man has ; but this will only be as the natural outcome of what properly constitutes my reign. The day will come when the meek shall inherit the earth, and when I shall be the King of the meek. Yes, the day is coming when it will be sung, ‘The earth is the Lord’s, and the fulness thereof ; the world, and they that dwell therein. For from the rising of the sun, to the going down of the same, my name shall be great among the Gentiles ; and in every place incense shall be offered unto my name, and a pure offering : for my name shall be great among the heathen.’ But my domain, in the first place, is the human heart and the human conscience—there, if anywhere ; if not there, nowhere.”

Glorious dominion! shall we not exclaim? the human soul! a thousand worlds could not purchase it. "What is a man profited if he shall gain the whole world and lose his own soul? Or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?" Verily, he who reigns in the human bosom, whose throne is the human heart, occupies a more exalted position by far than prince or potentate unloving and unloved. What boots it though a monarch should have the whole world under his feet, if, heartless himself, he cannot point to one subject that loves him; nor is there a single person within all his borders who is rich in affection—at once loving and beloved—that is not a nobler king than he. Unspeakably precious in the sight of God is such a kingdom. Rather than sit on the throne of the material universe, and sway the sceptre of universal dominion, would he occupy the throne of a human heart. Has he not, in a sense, vacated the one that he might obtain possession of the other? In lowly love has he stooped to bear the burden of his own sinful creatures; and in nothing is his glory and his greatness more manifest than in this—that being the greatest, he has nevertheless been pleased to become the least, that he might touch the springs of human action and bring

back a rebellious world under his gracious and sovereign sway. What has he not done in the way of self-sacrifice to woo the souls of men? "God so loved the world that he gave his only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life."

"And here am I his Son"—the Blessed Redeemer might have said—"endeavouring to carry out his great and gracious purpose in perfect conformity with his own great and gracious spirit. The Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many—willing, like my Father, to make every sacrifice, even unto death. I am among you as he that serveth, that I might reign in the bosoms of men for their temporal and eternal good. O! to live thus in the hearts and homes of mankind; to be there a transforming power, an ennobling, an elevating influence; to bring back many sons and daughters to God—what, in comparison with this, are the uppermost rooms at feasts, or chief seats in the synagogues, or to be called of men Rabbi, Rabbi? What, in comparison with this, all the glitter and grandeur of the world? This, this is Divine greatness—this the greatness without which, however otherwise great, man is very small; with which, how-

ever poor, despised, forsaken, he is a king and a priest unto God. And this is a greatness that is only to be acquired in the way in which God himself has acquired it, and in which I, his Son, am seeking to realise it for him. Whosoever, therefore, will be great among you, let him be your minister; and whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant. If any man desire to be first, let him be last of all, and servant of all."

In some such way as this the Lord may have addressed his disciples in that house at Capernaum. For we must bear in mind that it is only condensed snatches of his divine utterances which we have in the Gospels; and who will forbid us if, within modest limits, we endeavour to fill up what is wanting? O! we would fall down at his feet and worship, were it for nothing else than this wondrous teaching—this turning upside down and down-side up of the world's idea of greatness, and of the way by which that greatness is sought and obtained. Well may we look for new heavens and a new earth wherein dwelleth righteousness, when this reign of love—of self-denying, self-sacrificing love—shall have run its course, and had its day.

3.

“Verily I say unto you, even unto you my disciples, except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not *enter* into the kingdom of heaven, not to speak of being great in it.”

Thus spake the Lord, having previously taken a little child and set him in the midst of them. It was a little boy, but for the purpose which he had in view it might as well have been a little girl. Perhaps it was Peter's own little boy, but any little boy would have done—the son of a king as well as the son of a fisherman. For although, in many respects, children may be found to differ from each other, those points in respect of which they are all at one, are far more significant and instructive. Were it not that we are so familiar with this scene in the life of our Lord, and consider it with so little reflection, we should be startled by it. Who but the Ancient of Days, that became for the love he bare us an Infant of Days, would have thought of associating greatness with a little child? nor only so, but of setting down a little child to show us the door by which we can enter the kingdom at all? Not so does the

world select its specimens of greatness, or point out the way to be great. No. It is Herod the Great, and Alexander the Great, and Napoleon the Great; it is by force of arms, by policy, by cunning, by duplicity, by anything rather than what is child-like. Will Christ ever take to his bosom those great ones of earth as he took that little boy? Alas! the men who have grown great regardless of the rights and feelings of others; who have walked rough-shod over the hearts and homes of earth's poor ones; who, for their own glory and greatness, have desolated many a hearth—are not the men to whom Christ will one day say, “Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.” Great names, forsooth, they may be on the page of human history, but on that of the books to be opened how small, shrunken, and insignificant! Even in the church are we not too much influenced by the carnal idea of greatness? It is men who have made great discoveries; men of great intellect; men who can thunder in the senate, or at the bar, or on the platform, or in the pulpit, with whom principally we associate the idea of greatness; it is the men of wealth with whom—to her shame be it said—the church is so very ready to be carried away.

Oh! when shall we learn, not simply the way to grow truly great, but how to enter at all into that kingdom where the least is great beyond all earthly comparison?

“Look there,” said Christ to his disciples; “there is my charming picture, not only of greatness in my kingdom, but of the gate by which the righteous nation shall enter in. Come, my little boy, sit for a little while upon my knee, that I may preach from thy simple, humble, trustful nature, a sermon to these grown-up men.

“What this little child *is*, my disciples, I desire you to *become*. Cultivate this child’s *simplicity*. Hold not the faith in which I have been striving to bring you up, along with respect of persons. When my kingdom has made some little progress in the world, and there comes unto your assembly a man with a gold ring, in goodly apparel; and there comes in also a poor man in vile raiment, and ye have respect to him that weareth the gay clothing, and say unto him, *Sit thou here in a good place*; and say to the poor, *Stand thou there, or sit here under my footstool*—will ye not, in that case, be partial, and constitute yourselves judges having evil thoughts? For ought ye may know, the better man of the two may be the humbly clad; but

whether it be so or not, it will not be for you to judge. Act towards all, in all such matters, as a child would in a mixed company of rich and poor. Take no notice of those things which are so much recognised and coveted by the world. Avoid invidious distinctions. What the little one would do *unconsciously*, do ye *deliberately* and *voluntarily*.

“Moreover, have the *humility*, as well as the simplicity of this little child. Ignorant of all such distinctions himself, he is willing to occupy any place that may be assigned to him—the place of the servant, as readily as that of the master. Nay more: how right glad a little child is, if only you allow him to serve at all! In this respect also be ye children. O beware of the opposite of this charming quality; beware of *pride*. Pride, remember, goeth before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall. Is it not because men have so little of this child’s humility that oftentimes they become so harsh, cruel, and vindictive? Humility and kindness are closely allied. The meek and lowly in heart will not lord it over God’s heritage, but rather be peaceable, gentle, and easy to be entreated; full of mercy and good fruits; without partiality, and without hypocrisy. But let a man be proud, vain-glorious, selfishly ambitious, and

he will set the strongholds of Israel on fire ; he will slay their young men with the sword ; he will dash their children to the ground ; he will—Oh what will he not do ? notwithstanding the vain boast—‘Is thy servant a dog that he should do this thing?’ My disciples, ye knew not what spirit ye were of when ye disputed among yourselves by the way, which of you should be the greatest. Beware ! It is the spirit of the devil. Alas, for the poor world ! I see it all before me : weak and helpless ones down-trodden because of this very lust of place and power. Woe to the man who attempts to rise on the ruins of his fellow ! Better for him to have had the nether millstone hung about his neck, and to have been cast into the depths of the sea. Be humble.

“Furthermore, have the *faith*, as well as the humility and simplicity, of this little boy. He trusts that his father will do the best he can for him. He has all confidence—albeit unconsciously—in the wisdom and love of his guardian and his guide. Would it be too much for *your* Lord and Master, as you call him, to ask you to confide in like manner in him ? Depend upon it, you will each get the place in my kingdom for which you are best qualified, and the place which is best fitted for you. Would

it not be anything but a blessing had ye the allocation of your own places to yourselves? Hearken :—

“ A certain man prayed that God would grant him whatever petition he might present. And God told him that he would. He told him, too, that if he should repent of his first choice, he might have another, and even a third ; but no more. So, first of all, he asked that he might become invincible in battle, and be crowned with victory wherever he went. The prayer was granted. Soon, however, getting tired of this vain-glory, he returned and besought, instead, to have boundless wealth given to him. With this for some time he was content, until he began to think, What will all this avail, seeing that it is but a very little while and I must leave it behind me ? So, for the third time, he appeared, and requested to be allowed to live for ever. He was duly warned that, if this were granted, he should have no further choice. Nevertheless, he persisted in his prayer, and was endowed with immortality.

“ But by and by the companions of his early years dropped one after another into the grave ; yet he died not. The infirmities of years crept upon him ; yet he died not. The world with

all its pleasures lost its attractions for him; yet he died not. His prayer was answered, and the answer proved a never-dying curse.

“O, my disciples”—the Lord may be supposed to continue—“have faith in God, and have faith in me, the faith of this little child. Take not the reins into your own hands, lest the place you make for yourselves be to you a snare and a pit-fall. Be converted. Get rid of this worldly, proud, and wilful spirit, that gave rise to your dispute by the way, and which has constrained me to lecture you thus. BECOME what this little boy is: simple, humble, trustful; wise, if you please, as serpents, yet harmless as doves; in malice, children; in understanding, men—lest ye find in my kingdom no peace at all, not to speak of being great in it.”

4

Incomparable Teacher, shall we not say? ay, and Incomparable *Text*! How much may we learn from our children! To those little ones in the olden time it mattered little where Jesus was born, or how he was brought up, or who was his mother, or sisters, or brothers. But what was no obstacle to their coming to the

Saviour, when the Saviour called, was an obstacle insuperable in the way of the pretentious and the proud. "Is not this the carpenter, the son of Mary, the brother of James and Joses, and of Juda and Simon? And are not his sisters here with us?" Thus, they sneeringly exclaimed; "and they were offended at him." And so Christ could do nothing for such men. And for such men Christ can do nothing yet. See then the *necessity* of child-like simplicity and child-like humility if you would even enter the Divine kingdom, or the Divine kingdom enter into you—not to make mention of greatness.

Yes, we may learn from our children how, and how alone, the heaven in the heart, as well as the heaven in the skies, is to be entered—the kingdom of God within us, as well as the kingdom of God without. Let us trust in God, and in his Son Jesus Christ our Saviour, as our little children trust in us. Nor shall we ever know what the kingdom of God in either sense really means till then. Nor, till then, shall we find ourselves on the road to real and everlasting greatness. Oh! I have known men of valour, mighty in the world's eye and their own, right glad to come down from off their lofty pinnacles, and fly like

very children for refuge to a Saviour's bosom. They had fought with the world until they could fight with it no longer. They had served it until, chagrined and disappointed, they discovered that it would not be satisfied although they should shed their last drop of blood for it; and, as its ingratitude pierced them through and through, they bade it farewell. Thenceforth, with Paul, they cried, "The world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world;" and with the broken and the contrite heart, with the meek and the quiet spirit, with the simple, humble, trustful disposition of a weaned child, they fell at a Saviour's feet, entered in through the gates into the city, awoke for the first time in their lives to a sense of real greatness, and tasted the profound and heavenly calm which child-like submission brings.

XII.

A CERTAIN RICH MAN.

LUKE xvi. 19-31.

1.

“It was but yesterday I dwelt in marble halls, and paced my corridors in affluence and ease. Day after day for many a year I rose from my couch of down, and arrayed me in linen from Egypt, white as the untrodden snow. Robes of Tyrian hue, as if they had been dyed in the purple rays of the setting sun, hung from my shoulders, and fluttered in the bright and beautiful light of the land I shall see no more. Daily sat I down to the banquet, and the festive board groaned under the weight of the viands, and the red wine sparkled in the cup. ‘I made me great works; I builded me houses; I planted me vineyards; I made me gardens and orchards, and I planted trees in them of all

kind of fruits ; I made me pools of water to water therewith the wood that bringeth forth trees ; I got me servants and maidens, and had servants born in my house.'

"But, alas ! here am I now in this underworld, of which I had oftentimes heard, but never sufficiently considered. How changed the scene ! Naked I am as on the day I entered life at first ; and helpless and more destitute a thousand times. For then was I cast on the tender breast, and had all my unconscious wants supplied ; but here, not even a single drop of cold water to cool this parched tongue !

"It might have been otherwise. I could not hope, indeed, to bring with me hither my silver and gold, my purple and fine linen, and my sumptuous fare—hither, where all such things are of no value at all, nor necessary : but I might have had here something else of far superior value and suited to my present state.

"Who is yon person I behold in the distance on the opposite side of that great gulf ? How contented and happy he seems ! What blessed repose is his ! Can it be possible ? Is that the poor man whose neighbours, wearying to get rid of him, were wont to cast down at my gate ? It is even he ; it is Lazarus. *Would I had*

made a friend of that man! O that I had sent him some of my superfluous clothing, and some of my fine linen wherewith to bandage those wounds which the very dogs were permitted to lick—so naked, so forsaken was he! O that I had let him have something better than the mere unsatisfying crumbs that fell from my table! Out of my abundance, how easily spared might these things have been, nor have even been missed!

“Well do I remember the day I passed out through my gate into the street, and found that poor man there no longer. He must have died before me. When his brother-man had forgotten to be gracious, when his destitution had arrived at such a pass that he was at the mercy of the very dogs, it was well that death should have come to his aid. Death! why did not I then take the warning, and reflect that I too should die? Would that I had learned that day what Providence, no doubt, intended to teach, and had proceeded, ere yet it was too late, to make amends, as far as possible, for my foolish and fatal neglect! O that I had taken to clothing the naked, and feeding the hungry, and warming the cold, and relieving the distressed, and comforting the sorrowful! But no; I went on as in other days. The poor that

cried, I delivered not; and the fatherless and him that had none to help him, I did not regard. Upon me never came the blessing of him that was ready to perish; nor for ought I ever did was widow's heart made glad. Eyes to the blind was not I, nor feet to the lame, nor father to the poor. Self! O cursed Self! for thee alone I lived, and so *I made no friends yonder*; and, alas! *I have no friends here.*"

There are few parables that have been more studied than this one, and perhaps few, notwithstanding, that have been so much misunderstood. There should be no doubt, I think, that the lesson which I have endeavoured to point out in the foregoing soliloquy, was one which our Lord intended to teach. It has been asserted, too rashly, that nothing is said in this parable concerning the moral character of this rich man. In so many words, indeed, it is not said that he was a bad man; but his utter selfishness is nevertheless recorded as with an iron pen. Was it not a sin, think you, for a man to be rolling in wealth and living luxuriously, and yet allow a poor fellow-creature to lie at his gate, with all this trouble on him, and sink into the grave from starvation and neglect? What sort of man could he have been, to have permitted this? What a glorious chance was

here presented to make to himself a friend of the mammon of unrighteousness! What grateful remembrances of this man Lazarus might have had! How happy to meet might they both have been! How gladly would he, who was once the beggar, have run to the help of him who now begged! "O! *that* is my old friend Dives," Lazarus would have exclaimed. "He was kind to me when I was in poverty and pain. Many a time, when I was perishing with hunger, has he satisfied my mouth with good things; and in his own old cast-off great-coat have I oftentimes nestled, 'when the wintry winds whistled across the wild moor.' Let me go to my old benefactor, Father Abraham, and see if I cannot do something for him now, for all his former kindnesses to me."

But no. No such thoughts and feelings as these move Lazarus towards the rich man; and the remembrance of his inhuman neglect keeps the rich man at a far distance from Lazarus. And, I ask, can there be a greater gulf than this between two human souls? Oh! nothing can isolate man from his fellow like selfishness; even as there is nothing that can bring them closer together than kindness. Nor is it necessary to pass into the other world in order to get a sight of this huge divider, and see how

it separates man from man far as heaven is from hell. Oh! it is not the gulf *yonder* we have most to fear. It is the gulf *here*. It is want of sympathy, want of fellow-feeling, the absence of a truly human heart. Verily our Lord's parable has a solemn word for the men of wealth in our own land to-day. Nowhere, we are told, are such extremes of destitution on the one hand, and luxury on the other, to be met with as in Great Britain and Ireland, and particularly in Ireland. It may be exaggerated; but there can be no doubt of this, that there are thousands in the land crying, in language more eloquent than words, "Come over and help us." He who is so much wrapt up in self as to have no ear for such a cry, will himself one day cry in vain across the abyss which his inhumanity has created. It will not be—"O! there is my poor old friend Lazarus, whom it was heaven to me to help once in a day; how my heart bounds within me to see him again!" It will not be—"O! yonder is my good friend Dives; welcome, dear helper of the olden times; welcome, thou strength to the poor, thou strength to the needy in his distress, thou refuge from the storm and shadow from the heat; welcome to these everlasting habitations!" No. It will not be this. But

across the great ravine, like the crash of ten thousand thunders will roll the words of the Abrahams, of the generous-hearted, to the sordid, the selfish, and the soulless: "BETWEEN US AND YOU THERE IS A GREAT GULF FIXED!"

2.

"Woe is me! for I am undone. In my life-time I had much goods, and *goods* they were, had I kept them in their proper place. But in the midst of my abundance I forgot the Great Giver. Now comes to my recollection how my brother was accustomed to speak of *his* property and *his* produce. It was always '*my* barns, *my* fruits, and *my* goods.' But that was *my own fatal mistake*. I reckoned the purple, and the fine linen, and the sumptuous fare *my own*; whereas, now I see, they were only lent me for a day: nor did I thank my Divine Benefactor, nor lay to heart the fact, that the hour would come when he would take them all back again, and ask what use I had made of them.

"Oh, what folly mine!—the folly of that ancient king, who, as he walked in the palace of his kingdom, and surveyed the

stupendous walls and massive gates of his capital, exclaimed, 'Is not this great Babylon which I have built for the house of the kingdom, by the might of my power, and for the honour of my majesty.' But while the word was in his mouth, there fell a voice from heaven, saying, 'O King Nebuchadnezzar, to thee it is spoken; the kingdom is departed from thee, and they shall drive thee from men, and thy dwelling shall be with the beasts of the field: they shall make thee to eat grass as oxen, and seven times shall pass over thee, until thou know that the Most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever he will.' Would that that story which I read in my boyhood had taught me to remember my Creator, my Preserver, my merciful Benefactor! and that the talents and the pounds which I had were only given me to trade with, and that I was but a steward of the bounties of Providence!

"I have played the fool exceedingly. Not only did I forget the Great Giver of the good things, but—O *this* flame!—I put the good things in the very place of the Giver. I esteemed them, as my chief, my only good. Like my brother, I was wont to say, '*Soul*, thou hast much goods laid up for many years, take

thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry.' What could have possessed me? to think that a human soul could live on such fare! to suppose that short of the Great Creator ought could satisfy the profound wants of my immortal spirit! Oh! that I had learned from the heart to say, Heavenly Friend, thou hast made me for thyself, and my heart is ill at ease until it rest in thee. 'Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire besides thee. My flesh and my heart faileth; but God is the strength of my heart and my portion for ever.' But no. I substituted the creature for the Creator. I HAD *my portion in my* LIFETIME; and, alas! *I have no portion HERE."*

"It might have been otherwise. What a contrast the state of Lazarus now to mine! even as mine, once in a day, was to his. How poor, despised, forsaken was *he* in *his* lifetime—so poor, despised, forsaken, that his destitution might have been a snare to him, no less than my affluence has been to me! When I remember his abject poverty, and those uncared-for wounds, the wonder is that he did not curse God and die. But no. 'Shall we receive good at the hand of God, and shall we not receive evil?' so was he wont to say. 'My times are in thy

hand,' thus was he accustomed to comfort himself as he passed the long hours at my gate. In spite of all his poverty, he was a God-fearing man; and so all the days of his appointed time did he wait till his change came. And come at last it did. Death—the poor man's friend, that knocks alike at the cottages of the poor and the palaces of kings, came to Lazarus; and although *his* funeral was so insignificant as to attract no observation, yet—for how else could he have got yonder?—angels took possession of his soul, and laid it in Abraham's bosom! Then ended all his troubles—"the hope, and the fear, and the sorrow; all the dull deep pain and constant anguish of patience." And now has he come to his riches, which he was wise to lay up in the heavens; and the sympathy denied him on earth has he found in the home of the faithful. So might it have fared with me. Not because he was poor does he rest now in Abraham's bosom; but because he was true to his name, and was a God-fearing man. Nor is it because I was rich I am here—for he in whose bosom he rests was wealthier far in his lifetime—but, because—Oh! how shall I speak it? I am tormented IN THIS FLAME."

And was not this another of the lessons which our Lord by this parable intended to

teach? In those days when disease and destitution were reckoned sins; when it was asked, "Who did sin, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?" and when prosperity and affluence were regarded as signs of the Divine favour, how needful was it that the Lord should tell men in his own startling fashion, that the most abject condition in life will not keep them out of heaven, if they are good men; nor the most exalted, if they are wicked, out of hell! Is it yet held by some to be a sin to be poor? Let not the poor think so; but neither let them fall into the error of supposing that because they are poor here, they will be blessed hereafter. CHARACTER! this it is, and this alone, that will determine our place and our state; and when death shall have come and gone, and we shall all have lifted up our eyes in the world unseen, there will be witnessed no such division of men and men, and class and class, as prevails here; but the one great and everlasting division 'between the righteous and the wicked, between him that serveth God, and him that serveth him not.'

3.

“Inhuman, and therefore godless; godless, and therefore inhuman have I been. Had I, as I ought to have done, loved my fellow-man, I had also loved my God; had I loved my God, I had not forgotten my brother. Had I been a true lover of either, I had been a lover of both. Oh! that, on the wings of love to my species, I had risen to the love of the Eternal; or else, from love to the Eternal, had descended to the love of my fellow-creatures. But is there no hope for me yet? Is it too late to find at least some little alleviation of this woe? Must I for ever, and for evermore, be tormented in this flame? ‘Father Abraham,’ would my soul fain cry, ‘send Lazarus that he may dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue.’ The *crumbs* that fell from my table he obtained; would it be too much to ask from his hand in return a *single drop* of cold water?”

“Son,” the patriarch may be supposed to reply, “there is no water here. Along with all thy other good things, this also ceased at death. Oh that thou hadst hearkened in time

to him who stood and cried, saying, 'If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink,' and he would have given thee living water! What he would have given thee would have been *in thee* a *well* of water gushing up into everlasting life.

"But besides all this, even though a drop of water could do thee good, and that water were here, it would be beyond my power to give it. Between us and you there is a great gulf fixed, so that they which would pass from hence to you cannot; neither can they pass to us that would come from thence. My son, even Abraham thy father cannot now help thee. This, this was thy fatal mistake in thy lifetime. Too great importance didst thou attach to thy connexion with me. Thy Jewish pride has been thy ruin. Why didst thou not hearken to him, who, by the banks of the Jordan, lifted up his warning voice and said—'Think not to say within yourselves, We have Abraham to our father; for I say unto you, that God is able of these stones to raise up children unto Abraham.' No. There is no one that can stand to an immortal soul in the place of God; nor can the remembrance of a man's religious privileges do ought but aggravate his woe if he have failed to rise by means of them

to the love and practice of virtue. For warning in thy lifetime was the axe laid down beside the root of the tree, to signify that every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit, must be hewn down and cast into the fire. Here we behold the final blow struck. Here, in the light of eternity in all its dread reality we see, that whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap; that he that soweth to the flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; and he that soweth to the spirit shall of the spirit reap life everlasting. I, even I, Abraham thy father, cannot help thee, my son, my son."

There can be no doubt that this was another of the great lessons which the Saviour meant to convey by the parable. He spoke it to men whose proud boast was that they were Abraham's children; and in making Abraham address his one lost child in this striking manner, he made him speak to all his children on this side the grave and say, that unless they have Abraham's faith, and Abraham's character, and Abraham's generosity, they will all land at last in the place of woe, children though they be.

What a solemn warning to all members of the Christian Church to-day! We, too, are very liable to remain satisfied with our religious connexions. Let us be warned in time.

Let us lay to heart this truth, that if we have the character of that rich man, and can be guilty of his merciless conduct, the very highest offices in the church will not keep us out of hell. God forbid that our great privileges—our Sabbath-days, our sanctuary-services, our open bibles, our splendid opportunities for doing good and showing kindness, should rise up against us in the judgment to remind us of what we might have been, and to tell us that they are no longer of use to us; that they cannot now help us; that it is too late; that the day of grace which has passed away will return no more for ever.

4.

“I pray thee, therefore, Father—seeing that for me all hope in *man and the things of time* is fled—that thou wouldest send Lazarus to my father’s house—for I have five brothers—that he may testify unto them, lest they also come into this place of torment. Surely there is hope for the living, albeit there may be none for the dead!”

“No, my son, there is no hope for the living any more than for the dead, so long as they

shall continue impenitent. Except they repent they shall all *likewise* perish. They must cease to justify themselves before men; and with broken and contrite hearts strike their breasts and return. They must renounce their covetousness, and start the practice of that genuine and warm-hearted liberality that commands the devotion of the world. They must learn to fear God and keep his commandments. They must love mercy, do justly, and walk humbly with their God. They must love the Lord their God with all their heart, and with all their soul, and with all their strength, and with all their mind, and their neighbours as themselves. All things whatsoever they would that men should do to them, even so must they themselves do to men: for this is the law and the prophets. Nor must they harbour any longer the delusion, which, alas! thou didst cherish in thy lifetime, that, apart from these things, the fact of their being Abraham's children will save them.

“But why askest thou me to send Lazarus to warn them? Is this superstitious spirit not the spirit that has brought thee there? Is it not this that keeps thy brethren still in impenitence? Except they see signs and wonders they will not believe. ‘What sign

showest thou, then, that we may see and believe? what dost thou work?' Thus do they speak to him whom God hath sent from this great unseen world to warn them to flee from the wrath to come. A Ghost? an Apparition? a visit of Lazarus from the dead? No; no such signs would convince them of their sin and folly, and lead them to repentance. Hallucination! would they all cry out after the first emotion of astonishment and terror was over. Signs and wonders many have already been wrought in their presence, and yet they have not repented. Lazarus, too, *will* rise from the dead; but what will be the result? Instead of forsaking their selfishness, their godlessness, and their pride, they will go about seeking to kill both Lazarus and Him that shall raise him from the tomb. Seek unto them that have familiar spirits, and unto wizards that peep and mutter? No, no. Should not a people seek unto their God? What blindness, to consult the dead in the interests of the living! To the teaching of God, and to the testimony! If they do not *accord* with *this* WORD, they are a people for whom no morning dawns, but the night rather of thine own agony, remorse, despair."

"Nay, Father Abraham, say not so. If one

went unto them *from the dead* they *would repent*. Oh that I had been thus warned! I had not been here to-day!"

"Son, beware! Bring no such accusation against Providence, nor *think* of the Word of Inspiration so. Of all men in the wide world thou hast the least occasion to do this—*thou, A SON OF ABRAHAM*. Nor dispute with me. This, this it is that thy brothers must renounce if they would not lie down with thee in sorrow. They must learn to dispute less with the great Master, and be silent and teachable, and ponder what he has got to say to them. They must search the Scriptures, and acknowledge their sufficiency for all spiritual instruction and warning; and if the law and the prophets, and the words of HIM who is the crown and consummation of all law and prophecy, fail to persuade them, neither will they be persuaded though one rose from the dead."

This, I maintain, was *the grand main lesson* which our Lord intended to teach. How much useless speculation has gathered around this conversation of Abraham with the rich man concerning his five brothers! Now, it has been inferred, that we may pray to the saints; and again, that a man who had such concern for the welfare of his brothers could not have been a

very bad man after all. These, and all such inferences, are beside the mark. In this last conversation it is not so much two men in the other world that speak, as the Lord Jesus himself who speaks to the men of his day. In this conversation we have our Lord's own practical application of what went before. "See," he seems to say, "see your portrait as it may be seen in the light of eternity. In the elder brother of a former parable I gave you a sight of your unheavenliness, contempt for poor sinners, and no joy at their recovery. Look again. The spirit of that rich man in torment is yours. Yours is that spirit of *unbelief* and *superstition* and *disputation*. Whatever else may be wrong with you these are the cause of all, and at the root of all. This pride and wrangling must cease; and instead of having recourse to derision when I tell you plain, though unpalatable truths, ye must learn to blush for shame, and be converted, and become as little children. Then will all go well with you, and you will love God and your fellows; and you will know the blessedness of loving and of being beloved, of helping and of being helped; and your life beyond the tomb will be this blessedness perfected and perpetuated; you will go to dwell with the *faithful* and the *God-fearing* of all

countries and of all times. But if ye will not hearken to these sayings of mine, or neglect to do what I tell you, ye shall lift up your eyes in torments in the world beyond the grave; ye shall sleep in the dust, it may be in pomp, but, like a certain rich man, only to awaken to shame and everlasting contempt."

